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Sister Ellen May

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THE MADONNA



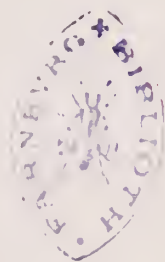
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THE MADONNA:

A PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION OF THE LIFE AND
DEATH OF THE MOTHER OF OUR LORD JESUS
CHRIST BY THE PAINTERS AND SCULPTORS OF
CHRISTENDOM IN MORE THAN 500 OF
THEIR WORKS

THE TEXT TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN OF
ADOLFO VENTURI WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
ALICE MEYNELL



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INTRODUCTION



IN the following pages Signor Venturi studies the history of the Image of the Virgin Mother, shown to us in Art, and particularly in Italian Art, as the centre of the labour and the love of seven centuries. There is no more wonderful unanimity in ancient or modern civilisation than this which made the young Woman and the young Child paramount so long. For seven centuries no generation or race of artists in Christendom wearied of the one subject. Greek Art surviving in Byzantium, Roman Art surviving in Central Italy, Lombard Art in North Italy, Etruscan Art in Tuscany, Gothic Art through the whole group of countries beyond the Alps—the Art, that is, of races of various character and of different ages, of exhausted and of fresh civilisations—all alike gave the highest place, as well as the most intimate and sacred, to the Image of absolute innocence.

Mankind has counted its sufferings from wars of religion, its terrors from superstitions. But who shall number the mercies, the pardons, the generosities, brought to

pass by the sight of Mother and Child, presented to the eyes of onlookers throughout the bookless ages? Those were immeasurable benefits; nor do they cease to be conferred afresh on generation after generation. For the philosophy which has begun to oppose mercy will hardly succeed in making cruelty, to which it opens a way, seem anything else than abominable, and compassion anything but admirable, to the right reason of Mankind. Cruelty towards the weak cannot fail to imply cruelty towards children, except under those impulses of protecting passion which woman shares with beasts. Those impulses, in any state of the world, must needs survive, so that some form of compassion would doubtless be perpetual upon earth, even upon earth as Nietzsche would have it; the compassion, at least, of maternal egoism. But for seven centuries Europe cherished in its heart, and in the Art that was the best expression of its increasing civilisation, the Image of the weakest and the most helpless of the human race—those who could not live but for the respect and pity of the strong—a Virgin and a Babe. There is no other group, assuredly, in history or in Art, that has so made for chivalry, or that has so nourished the sense of generosity and of forbearance in Mankind.

The Madonna and Child are less perpetually evident in Mediæval Literature (itself comparatively unimportant) than they are in Art. In truth, Architecture, Painting, and Sculpture had begun to decline when Literature

was coming to her strength. The reproach uttered against our contemporary Art, that it cannot add to the gallery of the Madonna and the Child, has therefore in it something of the irrelevant. Not, as of old, to Art, but now to Literature, must we look for the most intimate expression of emotion ; nor shall we, in this particular, be disappointed. The Breviary itself had dedicated the poetry of the Old Testament in mystical prophecy to the Blessed Virgin, “the Mother of fair love and of holy hope,” “bright as the sun, fair as the moon, terrible as an army with banners.” “My root is in an honourable people,” the Book of the Hours sings in her name, “and in the portion of my God His inheritance.” And “Who is she that cometh up from the wilderness flowing with delights, leaning on her beloved ?” The Book of Hours was chiefly the library of the literate classes before the renascence of romantic Letters. And now an English poet finds a new yet an ancient inspiration in the images of Scripture. Mr. Francis Thompson’s written *Assumpta Maria*, from which I allow myself a liberal quotation, brings before the inner eye glories of imagery that could not be told by the brush of Titian :

*Mortals, that behold a Woman,
Rising ’twixt the Moon and Sun ;
Who am I the heavens assume ? an
All am I, and I am one.*

INTRODUCTION

Multitudinous ascend I,
 Dreadful as a battle arrayed,
 For I bear you whither tend I ;
 Ye are I : be undismayed !
 I, the Ark that for the graven
 Tables of the Law was made ;
 Man's own heart was one, one Heaven,—
 Both within my womb were laid.

I, the flesh-girt Paradises
 Gardened by the Adam new,
 Daintied o'er with sweet devices
 Which He loveth, for He grew.
 I, the boundless strict savannah
 Which God's leaping feet go through ;
 I, the heaven whence the Manna,
 Weary Israel, slid on you !

I am Daniel's mystic Mountain,
 Whence the mighty stone was rolled ;
 I am the four Rivers' fountain,
 Watering Paradise of old ;
 Cloud down-raining the Just One am,
 Danae of the Shower of Gold ;
 I the Hostel of the Sun am ;
 He the Lamb, and I the Fold.

I, the presence-hall where Angels
 Do enwheel their placèd King—
 Even my thoughts which, without change else,
 Cyclic burn and cyclic sing.
 To the hollow of Heaven transplanted,
 I a breathing Eden spring,
 Where with venom all outpanted
 Lies the slimed Curse shrivelling.

See in highest heaven pavilioned
Now the maiden Heaven rest,
The many-breasted sky out-millions
By the splendours of her vest.
Lo, the Ark this holy tide is
The un-handmade Temple's guest,
And the dark Egyptian bride is
Whitely to the Spouse-Heart prest !
.

Then commanded and spake to me
He who framed all things that be ;
And my Maker entered through me,
In my tent His rest took He.
Lo ! He standeth, Spouse and Brother ;
I to Him, and He to me,
Who upraised me where my mother
Fell, beneath the apple-tree.
.

Where is laid the Lord arisen ?
In the light we walk in gloom ;
Though the sun has burst his prison,
We know not his biding-room.
Tell us where the Lord sojourneth,
For we find an empty tomb.
" Whence He sprung, there He returneth,
Mystic Sun,—the Virgin's Womb."
.

To my Bread myself the bread is,
And my Wine doth drink me : see,
His left hand beneath my head is,
His right hand embraceth me !
.

Who is She, in candid vesture,
Rushing up from out the brine ?
Treading with resilient gesture
Air, and with that Cup divine ?.

INTRODUCTION

She in us and we in her are,
 Beating Godward : all that pine,
 Lo, a wonder and a terror !
 The Sun hath blushed the Sea to Wine !

Camp of Angels ! Well we even
 Of this thing may doubtful be,—
 If thou art assumed to Heaven,
 Or is Heaven assumed to thee !
Consummatum. Christ the promised,
 Thy maiden realm is won, O Strong !
 Since to such sweet Kingdom comest,
 Remember me, poor Thief of Song !

To the writer of such poetry not less than to Correggio might we apply Professor Venturi's passage of praise : " He enters into the labour of all the ages. In his ear he carries the sound of the songs and litanies of the Fathers of the Church, the murmurs of old hymns, the echoes of the choirs of ancient sanctuaries. In his eye he carries the visions of prophets." And to what master's " Holy Family " shall be likened that of another English poet, Coventry Patmore ? " Ah, Lady elect," he cries, with the one and unexpected pang of irony at the outset of a tender poem, " whom the Time's scorn has saved from its respect " :

Grant me the steady heat
 Of thought, wise, splendid, sweet,
 Urged by the great, rejoicing wind that rings
 With draught of unseen wings,
 Making each phrase, for love and for delight,
 Twinkle like Sirius on a frosty night !

Aid then thy own dear fame, thou only Fair,
 At whose petition meek
 The Heavens themselves decree that, as it were,
 They will be weak !

Thou speaker of all wisdom in a Word,
 Thy Lord !

Speaker who thus could'st well afford
 Thence to be silent ;—ah, what silence that
 Which had for prologue thy “ Magnificat ! ”
 O silence full of wonders
 More than by Moses in the Mount were heard,
 More than were utter'd by the seven thunders ;
 Silence that crowns, unnoted, like the voiceless blue,
 The loud world's varying view,
 And in its holy heart the sense of all things ponders !
 That acceptably I may speak of thee,

Ora pro me !

My Lady, yea, the Lady of my Lord,
 Who didst the first descry
 The burning secret of virginity,
 We know with what reward !

To One, thy Husband, Father, Son, and Brother,
 Spouse blissful, Daughter, Sister, milk-sweet Mother,
Ora pro me !

Creature of God rather the sole than first ;
 Knot of the cord
 Which binds together all and all unto their Lord ;
 Suppliant omnipotence. . . .
 Our only Saviour from an abstract Christ
 And Egypt's brick-kilns, where the lost crowd plods,
 Blaspheming its false gods ;

Peace-beaming star, by which shall come enticed,
 Though nought thereof as yet they meet,
 Unto thy Babe's small feet,
 The Mighty, wandering disemparadised.

Again, what painted *Pietà*, or Lady of the Seven Dolours, or Coronation of the Virgin, shall we name as excelling in tenderness the several passages of Rossetti's *Ave*?

Mind'st thou not (when the twilight gone
 Left darkness in the house of John),
 Between the naked window-bars
 That spacious vigil of the stars?—
 For thou, a watcher even as they,
 Wouldst rise from where throughout the day
 Thou wroughtest raiment for His poor ;
 And, finding the fixed terms endure
 Of day and night which never brought
 Sounds of His coming chariot,
 Would'st lift through cloud-wastes unexplored
 Those eyes which said, "How long, O Lord?"
 Then that disciple whom He loved,
 Well heeding, haply would be moved
 To ask thy blessing in His name ;
 And that one thought in both, the same,
 Though silent, then would clasp ye round
 To weep together,—tears long bound,
 Sick tears of patience, dumb and slow.
 Yet, "Surely I come quickly,"—so
 He said, from life and death gone home.
 Amen : even so, Lord Jesus, come !
 But oh ! what human tongue can speak
 That day when Michael came to break
 From the tir'd spirit, like a veil,
 Its covenant with Gabriel

Endured at length unto the end ?
What human thought can apprehend
That mystery of motherhood
When thy Beloved at length renewed
The sweet communion severèd,—
His left hand underneath thine head,
And His right hand embracing thee ?—
Lo ! He was thine, and this is He !
Soul, is it Faith or Love or Hope
That lets me see her standing up
Where the light of the Throne is bright ?
Unto the left, unto the right,
The cherubim, succinct, conjoint,
Float inwards to a golden point,
And from between the seraphim
The glory issues for a hymn.
O Mary Mother, be not loth
To listen,—thou whom the stars clothe,
Who seëst and mayst not be seen !
Hear us at last, O Mary Queen !
Into our shadow bend thy face,
Bowing thee from the secret place,
O Mary Virgin, full of grace !

This is modern, through all its mysticism ; no antique words can make it anything but the work of this age ; an age more spiritual, if also more material, than any of its predecessors ; an age which expresses itself in Poetry rather than in Painting, but brings no less eager a vision on that account to the magisterial handiwork of the Past.

ALICE MEYNELL

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LUCA DELLA ROBBIÀ

The Madonna of the Via dell' Agnolo, Florence

THE IMAGE



DETAIL OF A MOSAIC OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY
 Archiepiscopal Palace, Ravenna

THIRTEEN centuries before Raphael drew the Madonna della Seggiola as a beautiful woman filled with love for the Child who casts around Him the glances of His falcon eyes, a Christian sculptor within the Catacomb of Priscilla had drawn in like manner a mother with the little naked Infant clinging to her breast, and looking over His shoulder as though on the watch instinctively to guard His own food and sustenance; she meanwhile bending her gentle head, and casting her protecting arms about her first-born. Here, as elsewhere, the Christian art of the Catacombs plays a prelude to the Renaissance, suggests the forms that are later to appear

in full light, resolves upon the type, and designates those conventions

which the mediæval world was now to conceal, now to disguise, and which the later age should re-discover and restore to life. As though there had indeed been no lapse of centuries, the Renaissance perceived,



FRESCO IN THE CATACOMB OF PRISCILLA

across the confusion of images in the Dark Ages, the first and original form, drew this gradually out through the darkness, and delivered it from all that encumbered its simplicity. In the early Middle Ages, the change had been from the simple to the complex; antiquity had been overlaid by fragmentary novelty; at the time of the revival of art, the action was

reversed, the complex became simple, and the final search was for the form of equilibrium and the expression of serenity. As a field, once green and prosperous, later grown barren, last of all restored to fertility, lifts up the re-clothed branches of its trees, so did art, after her long obscurity, resume the aspect of her youth. The Neophyte tracing a Virgin in the Catacomb of St. Priscilla, at the close of the second century, and Raphael of Urbino painting the Madonna della Seggiola and the Madonna of San Sisto, saw in fancy the same vision of a woman formed for motherhood, and full of the tenderness of a mother. But before the type should re-attain to the antique expression of nature and humanity, it had many variants, it shone out and was eclipsed, it was put out and was restored, as we shall see hereafter.

The natural character of this Virgin of St. Priscilla does not re-appear in any of the subsequent Catacomb designs, whether in fresco or marble.



Fresco in the Catacombs of SS. Peter and Marcellinus

In the group of Wise Men bringing their offerings to Jesus in His Mother's arms, Mary is enthroned, a noble lady, honoured with homage,



FROM A MOSAIC OF THE SIXTH CENTURY
Basilica of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna

but unadorned with the sweetness of the look of motherhood. Invested with mantle and veil, she takes little part in the scenes that surround her, and may be said to withdraw into a condition of mystery. And as decadent art becomes less able to represent thought, we find the figure of Mary despoiled of individuality as of animation, turned into a conventional symbol, the Virgin foretold by Isaiah, the sign of purely spiritual conception. No portrait could be averred of her who had lived in Judea, where portraiture was a forbidden thing. And, to the imagination, Mary, with all other figures of the Gospel

scene, vanishes like a shadow before the greatness of the Emanuel.

When peace had at last been granted to the Christian community, art in the basilicas and the baptisteries put aside its veils, and gave a body to the imaginings that had taken their birth in the shadows underground. The time had come to show to the multitude the signification of religious allegory. Then, in her triumph, did the Church rehearse the story of her past, and in her exaltation manifest her mysteries. The recital passed from human mouth to mouth, in that language of the people which adds marvellous things to the original text, and colours it with the poetry of the multitude. The fantasies of the Gnostics and the Apocryphal Gospels began to gather together, and their effect was to magnify the importance of the image. Men, long



MOSAIC OF THE SIXTH CENTURY
Oratory of San Vincenzo,
near the Lateran Baptistery, Rome

accustomed to the plurality of gods, were naturally inclined to the ready reception of legends, saints, and miracles, to the construction of a Christian Paradise prefigured by classic Olympus, and to the re-peopling of that Paradise with the restored statuary of the ancient order. Pagan humanism, that had made its gods in the image of men, re-awoke in the universal heart, and urged the busy fancy to invent a



FROM A MOSAIC OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY

Church of San Marco, Florence

definite shape, and to rescue the venerated figure from a vagueness that there was not even an authentic tradition to remedy. For St. Augustine had affirmed that no portrait of the Virgin was known to have ever existed, and St. Ambrose could find no authority for describing her more precisely than as one clothed with virtues, as it were *figura probitatis*. But at the end of the fourth and at the beginning of the fifth centuries, legends were taking shape in the East, to the effect that certain images of the Madonna, preserved in Jerusalem, were veritable portraits of Mary; by-and-by they were attributed to the hand of St. Luke in order to increase their importance by the citation of a historic



MOSAIC OF THE NINTH CENTURY

[Santa Maria in Domnica, or della Navicello, Rome

name, and this the name of the Evangelist who most of all took care to honour Mary as a woman lifted above ordinary humanity by the humility of heart that God loves to exalt. Popular devotion soon made haste to suggest this increase of honour to the supposed images of Mary ; to the portrait, or what was thought to be a portrait, popular faith drew near as



DETAIL OF THE MOSAIC OF SANTA FRANCESCA ROMANA, ROME

to a reflection of Divinity itself ; and the custom of veneration increased and spread. These images assumed the character of relics, and the face and features they represented are named as in fact the features and the face of Mary by the Fathers of the Synod of the East who, on this authority, describe her very colouring ; it was brown, they say, like the tint of ripening wheat.

A certain number of the images described as the work of St. Luke have a striking likeness to the designs of early bas-reliefs and frescoes



BYZANTINE ART

Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, Florence

representing one scene—that of the Adoration of the Wise Men ; these figures are veiled like Christian brides, and sit enthroned with the Child in the arms or seated on the knees ; or else, like the female figures on the Catacomb walls, called by Italian archæologists *Oranti*, they stand with both arms outspread ; or, again, are drawn with the left hand upon the breast and the right upraised as though in the act of intercessory prayer. And these manners of representation and composition were in part derived from the custom of the Christian burial-places, and in part suggested by the faith, increasing year by year, in the power of the Deipara, the helper of mortals. Assuredly, albeit these portrait-images were thus rife in early Christian days, they would not have been thus made definite and material

in the earlier day of the Apostles, when not one of the figures upon the sacred scene was allowed to show a form individual among the rest, but when these human and historic persons did but stand as signs of aspiration and of faith.

These St. Luke Madonnas took the features of Græco-Roman art, with the Juno type of regularity and dignity, as in the works of Pagan art—large eyes, slender nose, Athenian chin. Together with the idea of Mary as the elect of Heaven grew the idea of her outward beauty ; and

this beauty, as far as was possible to the art of the day, was conformed to the classic rule of the beauty of womanhood. The brightness of the fair hair of Aphrodite shed reflections upon the tresses of the Virgin of virgins, the Mother of mothers, the favoured among all women. Let it not be forgotten that there was no small difficulty in determining the ideal of human female beauty in a time wherein art, her creative energy weakened and impoverished, repeated helplessly, and with lessening felicity and at a greater increasing distance, the traditional formula of beauty left by the Greeks. Straight from nature and direct from life had those Greeks accepted their rule; whereas the images made by the Christians in the day of the victory of their religion were of necessity derived, transposed, translated, and this from a copy somewhat defaced and easily misinterpreted, grown indistinct by long use, like an old plate for engraving, of which the pieces seemed about to fall apart. The Virgins of



MOSAIC OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

The Duomo of Torcello

Detail of the Decoration of the Apse



MOSAIC OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

Church of the Martorana, Palermo



MOSAIC OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

• [St. Mark's, Venice



MARGARITONE D'AREZZO

[Gallery of Arezzo



GUIDO DA SIENA

[Palace of the Signoria, Siena]



DUCCIO DI BUONINSEGNA

[Museum of the Cathedral, Siena



CIMABUE

[Church of Santa Maria Novella, Florence]



CIMABUE

[Royal Gallery, Florence

St. Luke had the oval face, the rather large eyes with their sweet expression, the straight nose, the small and flower-like lips, the round chin. Such was the portrait that was sent, according to the report



GIOVANNI PISANO

The Camposanto of Pisa

of the historian Theodore, quoted by Nicephorus, by the august Eudoxia, towards the end of the fourth century, to St. Pulcheria, Empress; such also was the image to which the Romans of the seventh century ascribed the discomfiture of Phocas, and the victory over the Avars, so that the pictured patroness was called the new *Athena*

promachos, was hailed by the title of captain, victrix, standard-bearer, and unconquerable one. The image was venerated in the Imperial palace of the East. "If thou shouldst seek," writes George of Pisidia,



GIOVANNI PISANO

Cathedral of Prato

Deacon of the Church of Constantinople in the seventh century, keeper of the records, historian of the invasion by the Avars of the Imperial city, poet, and friend of the Emperor Heraclius—"If thou shouldst seek the tremendous throne of the Almighty—go, see and admire that temple dedicated to the Virgin who, bearing the Divinity

within her arms, bears Him in no ignoble place. Here let the sceptred monarchs of the world entrust their fortunes ; here, by the nightly prayers of the Patriarch, the many evils of the world are healed. And the bar-



GIOVANNI PISANO

Sacristy of the Cathedral, Pisa

barous hordes, if they come up against the city, shall but see Her who leads our armies, and at last shall bow their necks."

These famous images last mentioned were but two of a multitude venerated at Constantinople, in the Imperial chapels, and in the basilicas of the East. Many of these, raised to particular honours with the diffusion of the devotion of Christendom to the name of Mary, from

the day of Constantine onward, were enshrined in the fifth and sixth centuries within the caves of the anchorites of Syria and Egypt, were raised upon the masts of the ships that sailed the seas, were carried afield in battle, were lifted upon the walls of beleaguered cities, and carried in triumph under Byzantium's golden gate. The West, moreover, that works ever upon the creations of the East, revising and refining, gave a welcome to the portrait of the Virgin, not only as a sacred image to be dutifully preserved, but as the very effigy and portrait of the heavenly creature who had once lived upon that earth whereof she was the finest flower of grace. Nevertheless, the cherished and credited "portraits" ascribed to the same painter—St. Luke himself—whether they represented the Madonna in glory with her Son or alone in the action of prayer, had sufficient variety of feature to allow the succeeding and the imitating artist a great measure of liberty; he was free, that is, to alter the type so as to present one or other of the many attributes of the character of the Virgin, one or other of the emotions that the thought of her evoked in the mind of the thinker. This state of things prevailed most clearly, however, when Christian art approached its high noon; for during the Dark Ages, during the decline of that Græco-Roman art by which they lived, these images lost little by little all beauty; they assumed the meagre cheek, the strained eye, and retained little that was fine, except a certain majesty bequeathed by the image of antiquity. The ideal of the Virgin



SCHOOL OF PISANO

Camporanto of Pisa



GIOTTO

[Royal Gallery, Bologna]



GIOTTO

[Accademia, Florence



ATTRIBUTED TO CAVALLINI

[Assisi]



FRA BARNABA OF MODENA

[Frankfort-on-the-Main

was still too high, too remote, and also too confused, to permit the artist to animate his image of her with human sentiment, human affection.



FOURTEENTH CENTURY

Church of Or' San Michele, Florence

It kept during that age its hieratic quality. No human emotion disturbs the supernatural character of the Virgin of virgins, composed and arrayed by theology.

In the second half of the fifth century the Madonna found, in the West, in the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, her triumphal monument in the work of Sixtus III. (*Sixtus Episcopus Plebi Dei*), who, when the heresy of Nestorius had been overcome in the Council of Ephesus, and Mary had been con-

fessed the Mother of God, resolved that her images should be reconsidered with regard to that dogma. The sacred figure is there invested with the pallium and the embroidered robe, is adorned with jewels—the crown or the fillet about the up-gathered hair, the gem above the brows and in each ear; it is seated upon a chair furnished with cushion and *predella*. The attendant angels surround the Queen of Heaven, who beholds her own types and symbols on the architectural setting—apocalyptic signs from the faith of Gentile and of Jew claimed by the new religion. Mary here has not the nimbus which crowns the head of her Divine Son and the heads of the angels. Although her greatness transcends ordinary human limits, she is placed where she is, to the end that a mystical conception of the redemption of mankind may be demonstrated. At this time, moreover, the ideal of the perfection of Mary's nature had risen so high that its presentation by a portrait-image had become impossible, except in conventional form. "What voice," asks Basil, "shall be eloquent enough to sing hymns worthy of her, what flowers of human praises shall be fit for weaving a crown for her?" It was not given to an artist to represent the figure which poets invested with light brighter than the sun, and covered with a garment of immortality; he could not fix the eyes of his fancy upon the ideal, undazzled by so pure a splendour. On this monumental ark in

the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, there is the suggestion of an effort of the ancient elements of art to fuse themselves with the new ; but in the work that followed, and generally thenceforth, we shall find reality tending to fuse itself with the ideal, humanism seeking to dispel the mystic veils, and life attempting to enter the rigid shape of the image. It seems as though two streams were flowing across mediæval civilisation—one rolling from the ruins of the dark Imperial ages, doing its work in the corruption of society, of the clergy, and of the court, and of the surroundings thereof, ruled by the Emperors of the East ; the other giving freshness and life to the timorous and weary populations. But with the progress of years these streams changed their nature ; the one grew cleaner and clearer as it flowed, the other less cold ; and then only ceased the battle between body and spirit, intelligence and feeling, religion and life. Then only was art permitted to present the whole harmony of life, and produce the ideal of humanity from the ideal of divinity. The veneration of the Virgin, from the fifth century onwards, grew in importance

throughout the West, and foremost of Western places to receive this inspiration of the East were those that had Oriental dealings — Ravenna, Parenzo, Istria, and Venice. In the sixth-century mosaics at the church of Sant' Apollinare, at Ravenna, we find virgins carrying garlands to the throne of Mary, who with fixed eyes and an aspect of stone keeps her state, surrounded by celestial



JACOPO DELLA QUERCIA
Sacristy of the Cathedral, Ferrara

attendants. Although Byzantine art indicated this confessed sublimity by bestowing upon the Madonna jewels and rich array and heavenly

satellites, it left the face of the image without animation amid that splendour, and the bright details concealed the faults of design; faults, however, that implied the germs of the art yet to come, which within the new age was not to discard the throne, the majesty, or the crown of angels.

Of a date closely following that of the Sant' Apollinare mosaics, is the work of the apse of the Parenzo cathedral. Here the Virgin is seated in glory in the centre of the apsidal vault, her head circled by the nimbus, and wearing a white robe embroidered with gold and a dark mantle. The type resembles the more ancient Byzantine, but the corners of the eyes, strangely unclosed, have become wider, and the white shows beneath the upraised iris. The Madonna holds upon her lap the Child, who has a scroll in His left hand and gives the benediction with His right; two angels with long plumes stand at the sides; a few saints, a bishop, and a deacon offer gifts and prayers. It is not only the homage of angels that the Madonna is to receive; not they only are to form her court of honour; mortals and saints have joined their company. But already, in the time of St. Basil, a painting, we are told, represented the Virgin and St. Mercurius; and in the days near Constantine's, saints were grouped at the sides of the Madonna. As saints and mortals were gathered about the figure of the Redeemer on the apses of the basilicas, so they were collected, also, on the painted or inlaid firmament around the figure of the Queen of Heaven and Earth. The hymns of men were joined to the songs of angels, to the shouts of martyrs and acclamations of apostles, and to the hosannas of a departed and glorified priesthood; and the figure of Mary, participant, by Divine bestowal, in the heavenly empire of the Father and the Son, grows great in the minds of the faithful, and its image overshadows all other images of created beings. But the type declines; and although the ancient images attributed to St. Luke are brought into the West from their original East—images bearing their feeble traces of the art of antiquity—yet the Greek artificers working in the West seemed to have little recollection of that antiquity. The Madonna ascribed to a Greek artist, and made in obedience to the command of John VII. at the beginning of the Iconoclastic persecution, looks like an idol with a crown of rays, overcharged jewels and necklaces of pearls, or like the mummy of a Byzantine Empress; the dwarfed figure of the Pope is in



PELLEGRINI

[The Louvre



PELLEGRINI

[South Kensington Museum



LUCA DELLA ROBBIÀ

[South Kensington Museum

the act of worship, and seems a locust at the feet of a colossus. The decadence goes on apace. In the time of Paschal I., in the mosaics of the apse of Santa Maria della Navicella, while the Virgin appears still larger, the art of the design has sunk further into barbarism. And in this increase of majesty the Madonna is presented, as Vitet observes, with an aspect of sadness—if any expression at all is to be found there;



LUCA DELLA ROBBIÀ

[Berlin Museum]

all is austere, rigid, close-bound. The angels grouped about the throne are as slender as grasshoppers; the child Jesus has no kind of beauty.



LUCA DELLA ROBBIA

[National Museum, Florence]

In like manner with painting and sculpture, poetry loses its simple and natural accent; it compares the Virgin to the 'sublime mountain

whereon purity rests like the eternal snows; to a brilliant moon that has given a sun to the earth; to the lily, the rose, the vessel of



LUCA DELLA ROBBA

[Berlin Museum]

nard, the chalice of perfumes. And this emotion remains to give fervour to many a picture of the Assumption and the Coronation yet to be painted.

For, out of the depths of the ninth and tenth centuries, art began slowly to emerge. It recast the forms that had come to light in the earliest of the Christian basilicas, it took inspiration from the new legends that grew up like palms in the desert. Art revived in Byzantium, and entered upon a second age of gold, and in the miniature work of manuscripts there re-appeared the smile of antique beauty. But hardly yet did the sacred image of Mary assume a human aspect, hardly yet did this figure of a rigid priestess grow warm. It is only at the foot of the Cross that it begins to express the pain of human life which stung the heart of the Middle Ages, that it is shaken with the throes of grief, and weeps, as in the *Stabat Mater*. Except thus within the cycle of Gospel scenes, the Madonna remains the motionless centre of a glory of stars, of a company of patriarchs and



LUCA DELLA ROBBIÀ

{Berlin Museum

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LUCA DELLA ROBBIÀ

[The Frescobaldi Madonna



LUCA DELLA ROBBIA

[National Museum, Florence

prophets bearing witness to her by their expectations and prophecies, of a newer society of persons of the New Testament who offer their blessings, of Saints who pay her their devotions, and Angels that kindle their lights at her own. The remains of Roman work of the fourth to the sixth centuries, and the school of Mosaic that had its beginnings in



LUCA DELLA ROBBIÀ

[The Foule Collection, Paris]

the cloister of Montecassino, effected something to rescue the sacred image from this immobility, sphinx-like, Egyptian, hieratic, and ascetic. And this modification was furthered, moreover, by the effort to produce compositions, dramatic and actual, in which the figure of Mary bears a part or makes a movement. The art of pictorial drama necessarily gave the first freedom to the long tethered and encompassed type and figure of the Madonna.

The eleventh century saw the progress of the contrast between the Greek artists—fastidious, brilliant, and graceful workers—and the rude



LUCA DELLA ROBbia

[Imperial Museum, Berlin



LUCA DELLA ROBBIÀ

[Lichtenstein Collection, Vienna]

but ardent designers of the young Romanesque schools. These Byzantines, with their precious incrustations, their plaques of silver and gold, their illuminations in miniature, came face to face with the stone-cutters of Italy, the marble-carvers hewing their way to life and expression; the Byzantine art, delicate, severe, orderly, monastic, patient, and fine,



ANDREA DELLA ROBBIAS

[Private Collection, Florence]

encountered the art of the West, in its freedom and unrest, engaged in the attempt to add shadows and lights to colour and design. Soon, Byzantine art had no country of her own, but, wandering in Italy, breathed her last upon that soil which gave birth to the new energy.

For some time yet, the power of a mysticism that had long given to the artist dreams, expectations, and terrors in place of present and actual things kept the sacred image out of the range of life, and away from the observation of proportion and the increasing study of the



SCHOOL OF LUCA DELLA ROBBIÀ

[Berlin Museum



DONATELLO

[South Kensington Museum



DONATELLO

[Berlin Museum

aspects of physical being. Nevertheless, with a clearer conception of their own power, and of the law of their own life, and as the celestial city of dreams was drawn nearer to the earth, it came to be defined, to



DONATELLO

[The Louvre]

the artist's mind, as the seat of all beauty. That instinct of judicious equipoise between the ideal and the real, fantasy and reason, which Greece had fostered to such memorable purpose, even in the construction of monstrous forms, re-appeared in the record of Christian legend. Romanesque art was making its attempt to be rid of the

entire apparatus of Byzantine imperialism; but the image of the Madonna retained its length of lines, the strange eyes, the arched brows and marked orbits. The artist resembled a child who, seeking to express his unaccustomed thoughts, succeeds in pronouncing a few consonants, but no significant word. Art was essentially young in Italy in this age of difficulty—not decadent; it seemed to become more barbarous, rude, and inexpert, as it felt its own life in action; but the life was to grow more, and the barbarism to vanish.

In the castles of feudalism—Provençal, French, and German—the songs of the troubadour rose up in homage to the courteous wife of the lord and mistress of the household; and the praise of the greater woman and the ideal lady of chivalry sounded in the cathedrals consecrated throughout all countries in the invocation of Mary. Her



ANGELICO

[Museum of San Marco, Florence]



ANGELICO

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence



BOTTICELLI

[The Louvre



FILIPPO LIPPI

[Pitti Palace, Florence]



FILIPPINO LIPPI

[Prato



ROSSELLINO

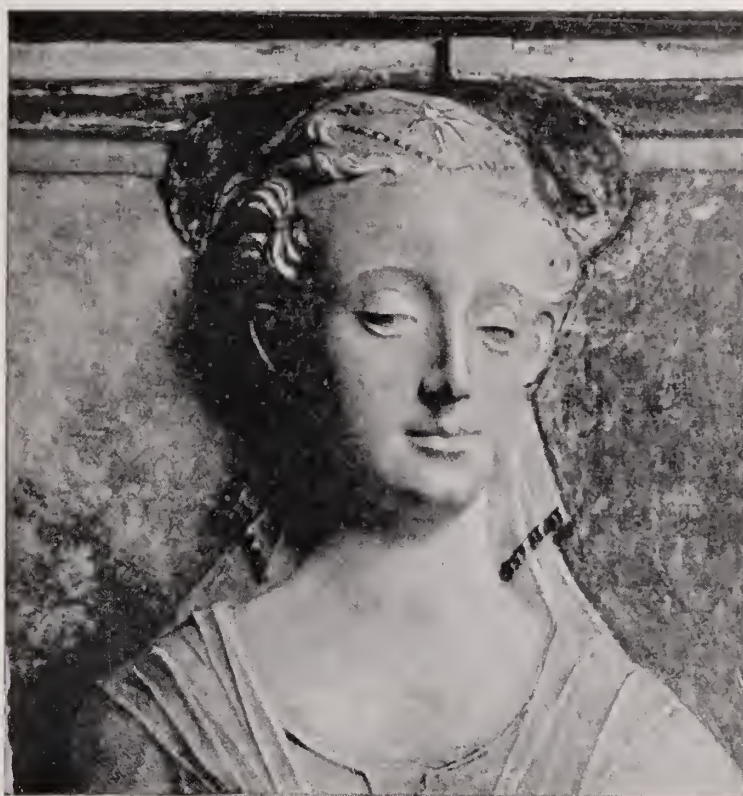
[South Kensington Museum



ROSSELLINO

[Dreyfuss Collection, Paris]

figure it is that the cathedral lights reveal, her figure that re-appears at the rolling away of the mist of incense. Hildebert, Bishop of Tours, like his "faithful one," St. Bernard, beholds her in his vision, clasping to her breast the Child crying for milk, and proclaims her to be as beautiful as the dawn, eternally fresh, newer than a spring-tide of flowers, sweeter than thyme and the blossoms of balm. The troubadour



MINO DA FIESOLE

Detail of the Madonna and Child

[National Museum, Florence]

Foulques de Lunel invokes her as the lady of his heart. Womanhood must tend to resemble her, or it falls into corruption and contempt. And by slow degrees the fear and scorn that in the Dark Ages involved the idea of physical beauty and of non-miraculous human nature was lessened. When, in the great thirteenth century, art had asserted its power, the sacred image of Mary, albeit still clothed with the theological virtues, had learnt to smile.

"Amid their play, and from amongst their songs
I saw a Beauty laugh that was the joy
Visible in the eyes of all the saints."

So sang the divine poet, in the day when Nicola Pisano had joined a natural grace to the classic tradition in his Pisan pulpit. The Juno-like



BENEDETTO DA MAIANO

[Cathedral of Prato]

type of the figure in this famous sculpture is still more animated in other works of this master, and in those of his followers. The head that was wont to stare fixedly upon the Child began to bend in the gentle act of love, and, as though conquered by tenderness, bowed itself upon the

smaller head. Thus did Giotto clothe with simplicity and with profound humility the Virgin of the heavens, to whom he dedicated an eternal monument in the chapel of the Scrovegni at Padua. In his Madonnas he put away the solemnity of the priestess; Mary became a modest woman of the people, albeit one carried above the multitude by divine joys and tremendous sorrows. She passes, obedient to the voice of Angels and of the Creator, through those temporal things that were for her full of anguish, until, in beatitude, she beholds her Son restored to the glory



MATTEO CIVITALI

Church of the Santissima Trinità, Lucca.

FLORENTINE STUCCO OF THE
FIFTEENTH CENTURY
Berlin Museum

of the Heavens. Giotto, when he has to represent the Madonna apart from the cycle of dramatic narrative, returns to an ideal type full of power, with the mediæval grandeur of proportions, and the full forms that are signs of fruitful health. But he composes this figure symmetrically, as was done of old, places a diadem upon the veil that covers the head, and a nimbus behind the diadem. Gothic art was yet to change something of this type, powerful and human, overhanging it with attributes and with ornaments, the tiara, the mitre, and the wreath woven of lilies. Yet it was the lady and the *chatelaine* that smiled upon mankind from the summits of

cathedral altars. The ideal elements then and thereafter were mingled with the real; and thus in the pages of Petrarch the Virgin becomes *cosa gentile*, the confidant of the secrets of his love, the friend who



MICHAEL ANGELO

[National Museum, Florence]

pities his distresses. Men communicated their life to the blessed in Paradise who, in the fifteenth century, move and live with the painter, and sit with him at his table. Here is the Madonna in the guise of a mother who plays with her child, of a good housewife intent upon sewing the child's little swaddling-clothes. In Tuscan art, the Virgin

of Luca della Robbia sports with her Babe and laughs with Him, pouts her lips for a kiss, presses Him cheek to cheek and breast to breast, and binds Him with affectionate arms. The Madonna of Donatello and of his school carries in swaddling-bands the Infant who



ANDREA SANSOVINO

[Berlin

joyously uncovers the maternal breast, or, without leaving it, turns for a moment His little head over His shoulder. The tenderness and vivacity of these familiar conceptions cheered the Tuscan heart in all the ways of the wayfarer in country and town; they smiled upon him from the walls of church and house; and the daughters who left their home



FRANCIA

[Munich]



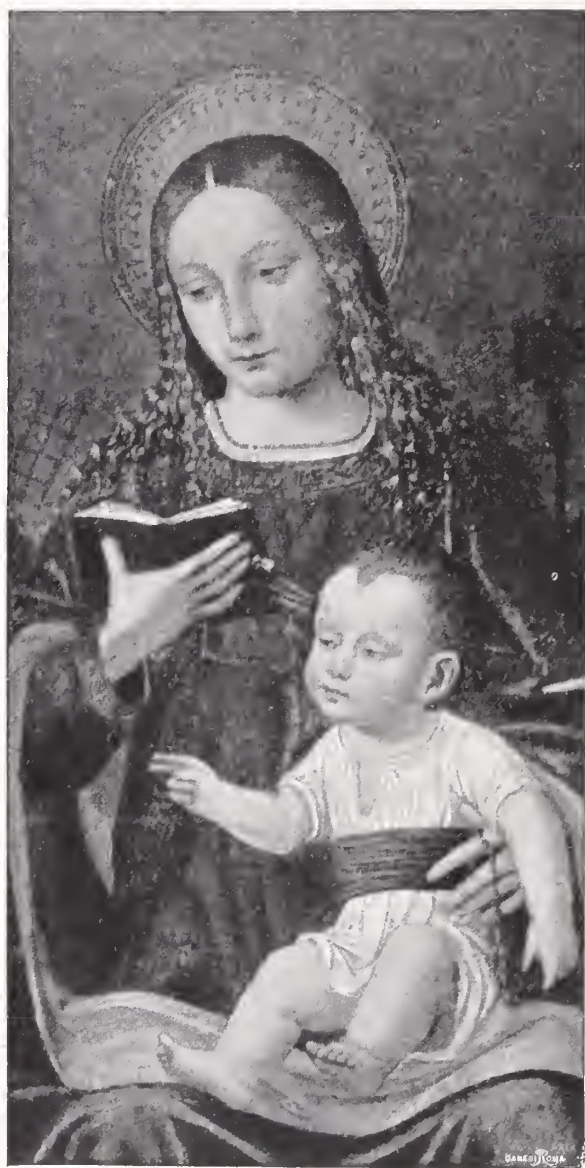
FRANCIA

[Munich

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as brides took away amongst their household goods the image of a Virgin, whether from the hand of Beato Angelico, who clothed the Lady of the Heavens in a mantle of stars—a garment of purity and innocence—or from that of Botticelli, who shed over her figure a shower of the lily and the rose.

Between Angelico and Botticelli we might well imagine a century or more to have passed, rather than the shorter time that in fact divided them. Angelico composes with a simplicity that at times looks infantine,



BERGOGNONE

[Private Collection]

and is the natural candour of his character; he arrays in a Gothic robe his most humble Madonna, whose light eyes look from under slender eyebrows, and whose figure is that of a young maid. Botticelli shows the woman all-graceful, in a festival of soft colours, between lilies and jessamines, amongst angels that proclaim her praise in the chorus of their happy company; translucent veils adorn her head; monograms, rays, and stars are the ornaments of her garment hemmed with gold. With Angelico the mystical Madonna finally disappears; for gentle with a different gentleness is she who sits upon the flower-bedecked thrones of Botticelli. Sculpture, moreover, preceded painting in rendering with all variety, and with human feeling, the image of the Virgin. In the Museum of Berlin is a stucco of Donatello's representing the Madonna in the act of holding

uplifted with both hands the Child, in His swaddling-clothes. Her head is bent, her lips half opened, her eyes full of enchantment, as with fervent looks she adores Him. But at a later date Donatello preferred a type less perfectly simple, and withal graver and more venerable. And even the Juno-like figure, adorned with crisped hair, he improved upon, or increased, until the day of the



GIOVANNI BELLINI

[Accademia, Venice]

matron in bronze at the Louvre, in her fringed mantle, wearing waving ribbons in the plaits of her hair, seated on a noble throne, and all encircled with *amorini*. Here the profile is Greek, but the eye has feeling; and the Child turns in His narrow garments to reply to the mother's embrace, and has one finger in His mouth, while His laughing eyes close above the rounded cheeks. All the aspects of maternal tenderness are presented in the art of Tuscany, and, with them, all the aspects of veneration towards the holy one, and all the inspirations and impulses of that art which was about to be developed in its amplitude. In a stucco in the Berlin Museum we have prophetic glimpses of the Madonna upon whom Correggio was to bestow his flowers of sentiment. Between Luca della Robbia's pots of growing lilies Mary has sprung, Mary, the loveliest lily in the world. She sits between branches of a rose-tree; thus was Francia to paint her in the Munich picture, and the follower of Filippino in that of the Pitti Gallery; and thus is she placed in the work of Luca della Robbia in the National Museum of Florence. And this Florentine type of



GIOVANNI BELLINI

[Church of the Frari, Venice



GIOVANNI BELLINI

[Accademia, Venice]

womanhood, blooming with natural health and beautiful with maternal tenderness, was refined and exalted by Rossellino and Desiderio da Settignano, Benedetto da Maiano, and Mino da Fiesole. Indeed, the graceful girls of Mino, the slender damsels of Rossellino and Desiderio,



ROCCO MARCONI

[University Gallery, Strasburg]

the noble ladies of Benedetto da Maiano, begin to lose their vigour; well-bred, caressed, sentimental, and very sweet, they come from lordly houses, and not from the dwellings of that populace to whom they are presented as bountiful dispensers of graces and of smiles. In Tuscan art two principal forms of representation prevail—the one signed by Donatello, the other by Luca: the venerated Madonna, solemn,

thoughtful, amid formal accessories ; and the Mother who, in the by-play of tenderness and grace, laughs sweetly with her Child. Filippino Lippi, in the gentle figure of the tabernacle at Prato, with its intimacy of feeling, seems to resume the sweetest and loveliest attributes



CARLO CRIVELLI

[Milan]

of the woman dear to Tuscan art ; and Michael Angelo, in the *tondo* at the National Museum, Florence, exalts and crowns the ideal of Donatello.

Towards the close of the fifteenth century, the breath of a new mysticism moved upon the earth. The spirit of Savonarola crosses the field of art. In Tuscany Lorenzo di Credi, at Bologna Francia, in



CARLO CRIVELLI

[Podesti Gallery, Ancona]



CAROTO

[Accademia, Venice



PIETRO PERUGINO

[Detail of a Picture, Uffizi Gallery, Florence



RAPHAEL

[Detail of the Madonna del Granduca, Pitti Palace, Florence

Lombardy Borgognone, in Venice Giovanni Bellini, alike give to their Madonna an air of devotion, of the cloister; she is thoughtful, still, at times almost somnolent. But under the hood of the white veil beauty is present, there is human colour on the cheek, and the face is lighted with human feeling. Bellini surpassed all others in the nobility



RAPHAEL

[Detail, Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

of those Madonnas of his who wear white linen on their heads, whose soft cheeks are opaline. In the earlier examples the great master represented the Virgin with the Child erect, giving the benediction; in the later, He exchanges signs of love with His mother, lays His hands on hers, and presses close to her neck. First came the majesty of the Virgin according to the Byzantine tradition, and with the Byzantine titles of honour inscribed by the side of the image; next came the idyll of motherhood. In order to judge of the loftiness of spirit peculiar



RAPHAEL

[Detail of the Foligno Madonna, Vatican Gallery]



RAPHAEL

[Detail of the Madonna della Seggiola, Pitti Palace, Florence]



LEONARDO DA VINCI

[Detail of the Annunciation, Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

to Giovanni Bellini, let him but be compared with Bartolomeo Vivarini, his contemporary, who at his side seems a boatman of Murano confronted with a doge. Bartolomeo Vivarini painted more than one Madonna with folded hands, in the act of adoring her Son asleep



LEONARDO DA VINCI

[Cartoon, London

upon her knees. Bellini represents the same action, but his Bambino is natural, is altogether yielded up to sleep, with one arm dropped along the mother's knee, with lips closed, with eyelids faintly coloured, with roses on the cheeks. The boatman of Murano was content with



RAPHAEL

a respectful presentation of the sacred image; the noble Venetian followed it into the heavens of natural beauty.

As, in Greek antiquity, the image of god or hero had been taken straight from life, so, in the modern West, amongst a people little apt



BERNARDINO LUINI

[Brera Gallery, Milan]

to linger amongst abstractions, the image of the Christian paradise, after an age of trials, experiments, and research, aloft and abroad, took pattern finally by the natural aspect and emotions of mankind. The blessed figures vary in feature and expression, according to the phase of individual feeling, and according to the racial character of a



GAUDENZIO FERRARI

[Brera Gallery, Milan

people; but art at its height resumed all varieties, gathered together all individualities, reconstructed the eternal type from the labour and the contribution of centuries, and presented the ideal of nations. On the threshold of the sixteenth century Italian art set up the type of beauty in the works of Raphael, Leonardo, Giorgione, Correggio, and Titian.

Raphael at the outset imitates from Perugino the simplicity of



ANTONELLO GAGINI

[Palermo Museum

the Umbrian Virgins, and added thereto a greater feminine maturity gathered from the custom of Tuscan art; and this, in the Roman period, developed into the vigorous forms of the women of the Campagna, whose large eyes and wide eyebrows and well-sunned colouring are



GIORGIONE

[Detail, Castelfranco]

present in the Dresden Madonna; not so their broad-tipped nose and full lips, corrected by the master's educated taste. Leonardo leaves the face beloved by his masters and precursors, and gives to his Madonnas that singular beauty of which we may say, with Manzoni, that "sweet and majestic at once, it is the brilliance of the Lombard blood." Giorgione and Titian represent, the one the feminine fineness

of form in the oval face, the other the warmth of health and vitality of the women of the lagoons; and Correggio finds his type of beauty



TITIAN

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

in the grace and the rosy faces of the Æmilia. As Raphael improved upon the characteristics of the women of Perugino, of Bartolomeo, and of others, Giorgione gave warmth to those of Giovanni Bellini, and Correggio sprightliness to those of Mantegna. In a word, it may be



MANTEGNA

[Trivulzio Palace, Milan



MANTEGNA

[Simon Collection, Berlin



CORREGGIO

[Modena



CORREGGIO

[National Gallery, London

said that the well-bred women of Italian courts, the beautiful mothers adorned with their household virtues, the girls with their smiles, brought throughout the great century their beauties together and offered them to the Madonna, so that the Sacred Image might inherit them all.



ANTONELLO GAGINI

[Comiso, Sicily]

THE NATIVITY OF MARY



BARTOLOMEO VIVARINI

[Venice

DURING a number of years in the seventh century, says the legend, in the night of the eighth of September a song of angels sounded in the cell of a monk, to whom at last the cause of the annual rejoicing was made known. The celestial singers were keeping the birthnight of the Virgin. Pope Sergius desired to join the angels in their festival, and thus established the holiday of the eighth of September, kept from A.D. 695 as the feast of the Nativity of Mary. "Give breath to the trumpets," said Sergius, Bishop of Hierapolis, "for in this sacred day was born from the royal stem of David she who was the mother of our Life, and who was the dawn to disperse our darkness." Later, St. John Damascene summoned the nations of the world, of all tongues, races, and conditions, to consent in celebrating her natal day. "To-day," he said, "from the tree

of Jesse a branch springs and bears a heavenly flower. A fruitful vine has grown, and is to produce the grape that will give eternal life to man." And while these hymns resounded within the church the people repeated with increasing interest the apocryphal gospel or proto-gospel of St. James the Less, wherein we read that Joachim, an exceedingly rich man, offered gifts to Heaven in abundance; but that as he stood with the other sons of Israel making their offerings in the Temple on a high day, Reuben refused his gift, saying, "Thou shalt bring nothing to this treasury, who hast no child in Israel." Joachim was filled with grief, the more as he perceived that all the just men of his tribe had sons and daughters. He departed to the desert and fasted there forty days and forty nights. Meanwhile Anne was weeping for her barrenness. As the same festival day approached again, Judith, her handmaid, would have prepared her, and she, having at first refused, consented; she allowed her mourning raiment to be taken away, tired her head, and allowed the maid to put upon her a wedding garment. Towards the ninth hour Anne went down into her garden and walked there, sat under a laurel, and prayed. Lifting her eyes, she perceived in the



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK

[National Library, Paris]

branches of the laurel a nest of sparrows, and wept anew for her misfortune when she saw how fruitful were those birds, and considered how the fruitful fishes filled the seas, and the fruitful beasts the land. Then did the Angel of the Lord fly forth to tell her that she too should have the felicity of motherhood; two other angels, moreover, came to her and told her of the

home-coming of Joachim, who was in truth just then returning from the mountain with his flocks. Anne was at the door of their house when she saw him. Running, she met him and joyously threw her arms about his neck. On the morning following, Joachim offered his gift and was not denied; he returned happy to his house, and there, after nine months, was born his daughter Mary. This story of the unauthorised "gospel," with variants, was the popular legend of the Nativity of



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK

[National Library, Paris]

Mary. In the apocryphal gospel of St. James Anne makes her lamentation in her garden. According to the Gnostic legend she weeps within doors, upon her knees, and Joachim is bidden by an Angel to offer a sacrifice to God, whereupon he takes a white lamb and sacrifices it, and the Angel goes back to Heaven in the smoke of the burnt-offering. Seeing this, Joachim falls upon his face, and so abides from the sixth hour until the evening. His servants raise him up, and hearing, alarmed, the story of his vision, they urge him to return home to the care of his wife. But Joachim, uncertain what to do, falls into a deep sleep, sees the Angel in a dream, receives comfort from him, and is commanded to go home. He tells the dream to his shepherds, and they rejoice



GIOTTO

[Church of the Arena, Padua]



GIOTTO

[Church of the Arena, Padua



GIOTTO

[Church of the Arena, Padua]

with him and enjoin his instant obedience. After thirty days' journey with the lingering and feeding flocks, the patriarch draws near to the Golden Gate of Jerusalem, and there he meets his wife Anne, who had gone out thither with her maids, instructed by the Angel, to await her husband's coming. The Greek Menology of A.D. 1025, now in the



GIOTTO

[Church of the Arena, Padua]

Vatican Library, tells the same story. There we see Anne laid in her bed in an open chamber, three women bringing food to her bedside, another making ready to wash the little girl-baby, and testing with her hand, nurse-like, the temperature of the water in the little bath. This painting has the beauty and the composition of an antique. We may take it as a derivation from an ancient bas-relief representing the horoscope of a child in presence of the Fates; perhaps in this case the newly-born is Achilles. The three ministering women in the chamber



GIOVANNI DA MILANO

[Santa Croce, Florence

of Anne may probably be a reminiscence of the Fates, present at every unclosing of the eyes of the newly-born, as the woman about to wash



GIOVANNI DA MILANO

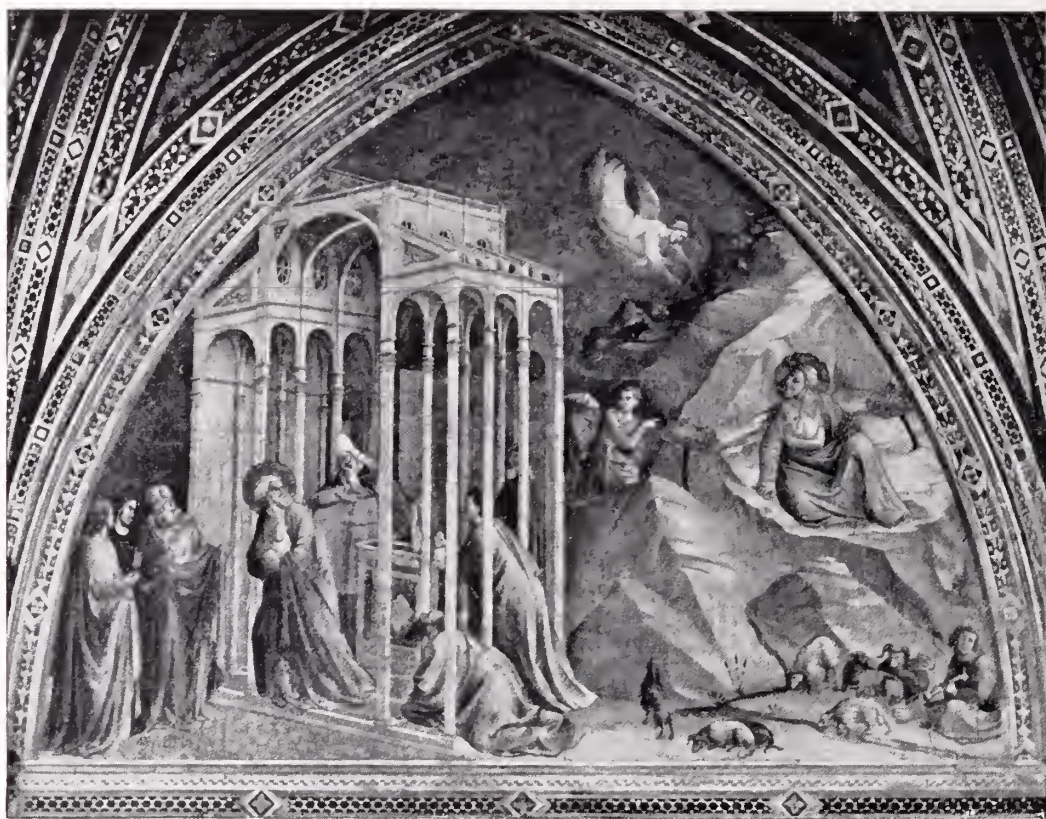
[Santa Croce, Florence]

the child may be a remembrance of the slave who appears in the antique bas-reliefs, one of the group in the natal chamber, ready to wash the infant Achilles, or whatever hero has entered into the world, in a basin of water before the swaddling.

In the *Amphitryon* of Plautus, Bormia the slave was employed in the washing of a little infant, and this was, in Antiquity, the office of a slave. In a fragment of a sarcophagus figured by Raoul Rochette, one slave is intent upon the washing of a baby in a large basin, while another is preparing to receive it in a *linteolum* or sheet which she holds unfolded in her hands; and the three Fates are present at the birth, the first with a globe, the second with tablets, the third with a distaff and a spindle.

More complex is the representation of the birth-scene in the Homilies of James the Monk. In these miniatures the parents of Mary

appear as persons of royal race, and observers of the ceremony of the law, eminent in their tribe for their love of righteousness and their generous dealing with the poor. "The righteous fruit came of righteous beings," exclaims the Byzantine monk of the beginning of the twelfth century, and he shows Joachim and Anne in the act of offering their gifts in the Temple to Zacharias, who puts them aside. "It is not permitted to thee," he says to Joachim, "to be the first to make an offering [thus is it expressed in the Greek text], because thou hast no children in Israel." Grieved to the heart, Joachim endures the rebuke, and withdraws to the wilderness; Anne, to her garden. And so forth to the Nativity of Mary. The monk James represents the Nativity at the close of all these annunciatory visions. He shows us Anne in childbed, with the nimbus, two attendant women in the background washing her glorious infant, and Joachim, accompanied by the twelve



TADDEO GADDI

[Santa Croce, Florence]

chiefs of the tribes of Israel, standing to hear the word of the mother of Mary, according to the text—"Rejoice ye in my maternity! Go

now to the Temple, make ready the altars, kindle the fires, sing a wedding-song, and carry the child as a bride to the sanctuary." The monk goes on to narrate, by text and miniature, the life of Mary, her childhood in the house of her parents, her sleep in a golden cradle, and



TADDEO GADDI

[Santa Croce, Florence]

on the knees of Anne, while David comes to gaze upon her, or the priests bidden by Joachim give her their benediction, or her mother caresses her. Although the painters did not follow James the Monk in every detail of his analysis, nevertheless the story he illustrated remained, from the eleventh century onward, the theme of sacred art.

In Giotto that legend found an interpreter of dramatic imagination. His treatment, as we trace it in the paintings of Padua, seems to purify and to exalt the story, as Pheidias, Æschylus, and Sophocles exalted

the Aryan myth. In the first scene we find a low-walled, gated enclosure, a kind of presbyterial sanctuary, within which a priest, a mitred priest, sits in the act of giving absolution or blessing to a man kneeling at his feet; close to the gate rises a pulpit, behind the priest a ciborium



TADDEO GADDI

[Santa Croce, Florence]

with four twisted columns. Before the sanctuary, and on its step stands Reuben, also wearing an official cap, his beard white and long, his hair flowing to his shoulders, darting fire from his angry eyes, like the Moses of Michael Angelo. His figure, bent with years, seems to renew its youth in the energetic gesture of refusal; and Joachim, keeping in his grasp the pious offering just rejected, turns to depart, daunted by the priestly rebuke. Here, in the next scene, he is down-cast, his head bowed, his eyes upon the ground, wrapped up in his

long mantle, walking among the rocks, seeking the fold of his sheep, taking no heed of the dog frisking and springing to his knee. Two shepherds, perceiving the melancholy of Joachim's advance, exchange,



SCHOOL OF GIOTTO

[Cloister of Santa Maria Novella]

by stealth, glances of surmise and of inquiry; the sheep come forth crowding out of the enclosure. Here, again, is the Angel appearing to the praying and sorrowing Anne, who kneels by her bed with signs of weeping and watching in her face. He enters like a swallow from the sky, and to the forlorn one announces with outstretched hand the favour



of the Lord. Meanwhile, Anne's handmaid, in the little chamber adjoining, seems to pause in her spinning and to turn her eyes as though



BARTOLO DI M. FREDI

[San Gimignano]

she heard some unwonted sound. Next, Joachim is on the mountain before an altar upon which he has offered a spotless lamb, according to the express mandate of the Angel, who, in the guise of a majestic Levite, stands before the bowed and kneeling saint. Flames rise from the altar, smoke goes up from the sacrifice; and from above the image of the hand of God appears, as in so many early Christian allegories, from between clouds, beckoning to the shepherd who stands praying behind his lord, summoning Joachim to rise, or accepting the burnt-sacrifice. In the next division of the fresco the saint sleeps upon his arm folded over his right knee, as though slumber had overtaken him amid the agitations of various thoughts opposed and fluctuating. No one, it seems, ventures to disturb that sleep; shepherds, one of whom leans upon his staff, look at the sleeper, the little faithful dog watches, a lamb stretches its head towards him; and the Angel, reappearing aloft, puts forth a hand, repeating to his dream the promise of the Lord. The meeting

of Joachim and Anne follows; it takes place before the Golden Gate of the city of Jerusalem, which assumes in Giotto's work the aspect of the gate of a Tuscan town, machicolated, flanked by a couple of towers with barbicans, and reached by means of a drawbridge. The embrace is expressively tender; Anne takes the head of the aged Joachim with her right hand, and places her left in the thicket of his beard to bring his mouth to her own. The saints exchange a long pressure of affection. The maids that follow St. Anne rejoice in the encounter, one standing forward, another pressing from the back to applaud. And here is the newly born Mary, wrapped in swaddling-clothes and held forth by a handmaid to her mother, while other women are busied in the room about their service to the mother and child.



ORCAGNA

[Or' San Michele, Florence]

The followers of Giotto were true to the forms of the legend determined by him and prescribed by his example. Giovanni da Milano,



OTTAVIANO NELLI

[Foligno



OTTAVIANO NELLI

[Foligno



DOMENICO GHIRLANDAJO

[Santa Maria Novella, Florence

in Santa Croce at Florence, represents in the first place Joachim turned away from the Temple, while through the arcades are seen a crowd of men and women presenting their lambs to the priest; then Joachim, ashamed after the rebuke, amongst his sheep upon the mountain, visited by the Angel, who commands him to return to Jerusalem and to his wife. Joachim is shown again before the Golden Gate of the city, as he greets with embraces his wife St. Anne, led by an Angel also to the meeting-place. Finally, Giovanni da Milano represents the Nativity of Mary, with a most graceful group of three women surrounding the swaddled new-born child—one holding her and looking tenderly upon her; another reaching out her arms and hollowing her hands, desiring also to have the little figure to hold; the third caressing it. Also in the church



BARTOLOMEO VIVARINI

[Santa Maria Formosa, Venice]

of Santa Croce Taddeo represents, but with more dramatic vehemence, the thrusting out of Joachim, the annunciation of his paternity, the meeting with Anne outside the Jerusalem gate, and finally the birth of the Virgin; and here again the loving women about the child, their smiles and play, form the most charming and the most vivacious passage of the picture. The same scene, and much the same composition, are found in the work of the other fourteenth-century fresco painters—for example in that of Agnolo Gaddi in the cathedral of Prato, in other paintings of the school of Giotto in Santa Maria

Novella, and in the works of Bartolo di Fredi at San Gimignano. Orcagna, in Or' San Michele, represents no part of the story except the birth of the Virgin. He shows Anne laid in her bed with her head propped on her left hand, much in the attitude in which the dead were drawn upon the Etruscan urns. Perhaps here, as in so many incidents of Tuscan and Umbrian art, we have a reminiscence of Etruscan custom lingering in the heart of the race, in its tendencies, in its habits. The face of Anne, albeit the face of an aged woman, is lighted by a smile of maternal love. She puts forth a hand to stroke the cheek of her little



FRA FILIPPO LIPPI

[Pitti Palace, Florence]

one whom a maid, seated upon the ground, holds in her arms and gazes upon. Near the bed are the three women, like the Fates that waited

upon the newly-born. One of the women is that maid, Judith, who, according to the apocryphal story, ministered to the sorrowing Anne



VITTOR CARPACCIO

[Accademia, Venice]

when she wept over her own sterility, in despair because she had no son or daughter in Israel; who gave her courage, urged her to put her trust in God, and dressed her in her best raiment for the return of Joachim, saying to her, "Surely, as I am thy handmaid, thou hast the form and beauty of a queen!"

The fifteenth century added little or nothing to the scheme of these compositions. Filippo Lippi made for one of his Madonnas a background

of the scenes of her Nativity, with a St. Anne caressing the cheek of the swaddled child; and of the previous encounter of Joachim and Anne, not before the Jerusalem gate, but upon the threshold of the house, to



BERNARDO LUINI

[Brera Gallery, Milan]

which climbs by a stair the old man, whilst his old wife helps him up with her hand and welcomes him. In Santa Maria Novella, Ghirlandajo gives the ultimate and complete shape to the story. In the rejection of Joachim at the Temple doors the painter has evidently kept in mind the

fourteenth-century composition, especially that of Giovanni da Milano ; but he adds thereto the grandeur of effect proper to a scene that may be imagined to take place before a company of Florentine spectators.



ANDREA DEL SARTO

[The Annunziata, Florence

The birth of the Virgin comes to pass in a magnificent pillared chamber adorned with inlaid work, and with bas-reliefs of children making music. A handmaid holds in her arms, with smiles, the new-born baby, who puts a finger into her little mouth. Another maid pours water. A

third, and Anne herself from her bed, turn their faces towards a Florentine lady clad richly in brocade, who with four attendant women enters as witness of the Nativity of Mary.

The sixteenth century seems almost to have forgotten this subject of art, so long beloved. At Venice Carpaccio paints nothing of it except the embrace of Joachim and Anne; but in the place of the maids of the narrative, following Anne, and the shepherds carrying victims and offerings in the suite of Joachim, he introduces two saints, making of his composition a mystical scene rather than the illustration of a history. Bernardino Luini at Milan kept the waiting women and the shepherds at the side of his picture of the meeting of Joachim and Anne, but the scene had grown more familiar and less sincere, less reverent. For this reason we said that the fifteenth century had lost touch with this theme of art so caressed in the thirteenth, and made the means of expressing so much tender and affectionate feeling for infancy. The nurse of the Roman bas-reliefs becomes the gossip, laughing, chattering, and enjoying herself in the birth-room with mother and child; the Fates turn to three other good women bringing food and linen to the mother. If the realism of the fifteenth century had somewhat impaired the character of the scene, the sixteenth neglected it. That age tended to enlarge and to give dignity—the dignity of the world—to its scenes of art; it sought magnificent composition, and an equality of nobility amongst the figures. Doubtless such a temper was ill-suited to the scene of the Nativity of Mary. The incident was simple, a household event, a matter of women, lacking the heroic, and wanting especially the weight of noble character. What we moderns call a genre subject was precisely that of the birth-chamber in the house of Joachim and Anne; and the sixteenth century sacrificed “genre” to its own magnificence.



TITIAN

[Accademia, Venice]

THE PRESENTATION OF MARY IN THE TEMPLE



BARTOLO DI FREDI

[Siena]

WHEN Anne had weaned her daughter (so says the apocryphal gospel in the chapter of the Nativity), she went with Joachim to the Temple of the Lord to make her offerings, and there she left behind her the child Mary, so that she might be brought up amongst the virgins who night and day abode there, praising God. When the Child was brought before the Temple, she walked up the stair (fifteen stairs, we are told, there were) without turning round, and without calling for her father and mother as little children are wont to do. All that saw it were filled with wonder. Mary did not seem an infant, nor was she like any other child in her demeanour, so

absorbed was she, and so constant in prayer. Her face was as white as snow; all her words were full of grace and wisdom, truth was on her lips. Another legend relates that Mary was three years old when she was taken to the Temple, although it was not customary to admit virgins of less than five years. Joachim and Anne gathered all the little maidens of their tribe, and, having given them lights to carry, sent them up to



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK

[National Library, Paris]

the Temple of the Lord. Thus is the holy Virgin represented in the Homilies of James the Monk, preceded by the maidens of the tribe, one of them covered with a nuptial veil, bearing torches. The sixty strong men of the vision of Solomon form their escort. Mary walks, says James the Monk, purifying the earth touched by her feet; she wears no splendour of ornaments, but is clothed with the mantle of purity, and she surpasses the virgins that bear her company as the sun surpasses the stars.

Byzantine art of the second great age recalled the antique representations of espousals with their accessories: the torches, for instance, characteristic attribute of Hymen, were always carried in front of the bride



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK
The Virgin in the Temple is fed by an Angel



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK
The Virgin receives the Purple

in Roman nuptials. Who does not remember that ode of Catullus wherein he calls upon Hymen to wave the resinous torch, and to urge the chaste company of virgins to sing in chorus, "O Hymeneal God! O Hymen!" The poet calls upon the virgins to open the doors of the house, and the bride comes forth and cries, "See how the torches shake



GIOTTO

[Padua]

their flaming hair!" Thus, too, in the Menology of the Vatican the Virgin, drawing near to the sacred shrine where Zacharias awaits her with outstretched hands, is followed by her parents, and by maidens with torches; but this reminiscence of antiquity soon disappeared from art, with the symbolic figures of the sixty strong men of the vision of Solomon.

The art of the West preserved the character of festival that belonged to the Presentation of the Virgin, but did not imitate Byzantine art in giving it a nuptial character; it diminished the number, moreover, of

symbols and allusions. Giotto drew the little girl standing with folded hands at the top of the flight of steps, and her mother, holding her by



TADDEO GADDI

[Santa Croce, Florence]

the arms, bending anxiously and tenderly behind her. The aged Zacharias gravely holds forth his hands to the child, while the little crowd of maidens press forward curiously to see their new companion; they are, as it were, just out of the cloister, and in monastic dress; Joachim, at the foot of the stairway, looks on; a porter carries after him a basket covered with a cloth, holding offerings for the Temple; other figures stand and watch the event. Thus the genius of Giotto transposed the scene from the wonderful Temple of Israel to the gateway of an Italian cloister; and his followers also distinguished the cloister from the Temple, in accordance with the description found in the writings of the monk Epiphanius (twelfth century), who mentions the dwellings of the virgins in

their retirement near the portico, and not far from the altar. The Temple, or church, as these painters imagined it, was reached by fifteen steps, and open. Taddeo Gaddi has the group of young maidens, thronging out at their own doorway, with their instruments of music in their hands for the accompaniment of the Psalms of David. Zacharias, with his assistants, on the threshold of the Temple, vested in the priestly robes and ornaments, seems to be prepared for the reception of a king. From terrace and window men and women watch the religious act; they are



GIOVANNI DA MILANO

[Santa Croce, Florence]

the fathers and mothers of the noble families of Jerusalem; and the father and mother of Mary, wearing the nimbus of their election, stand

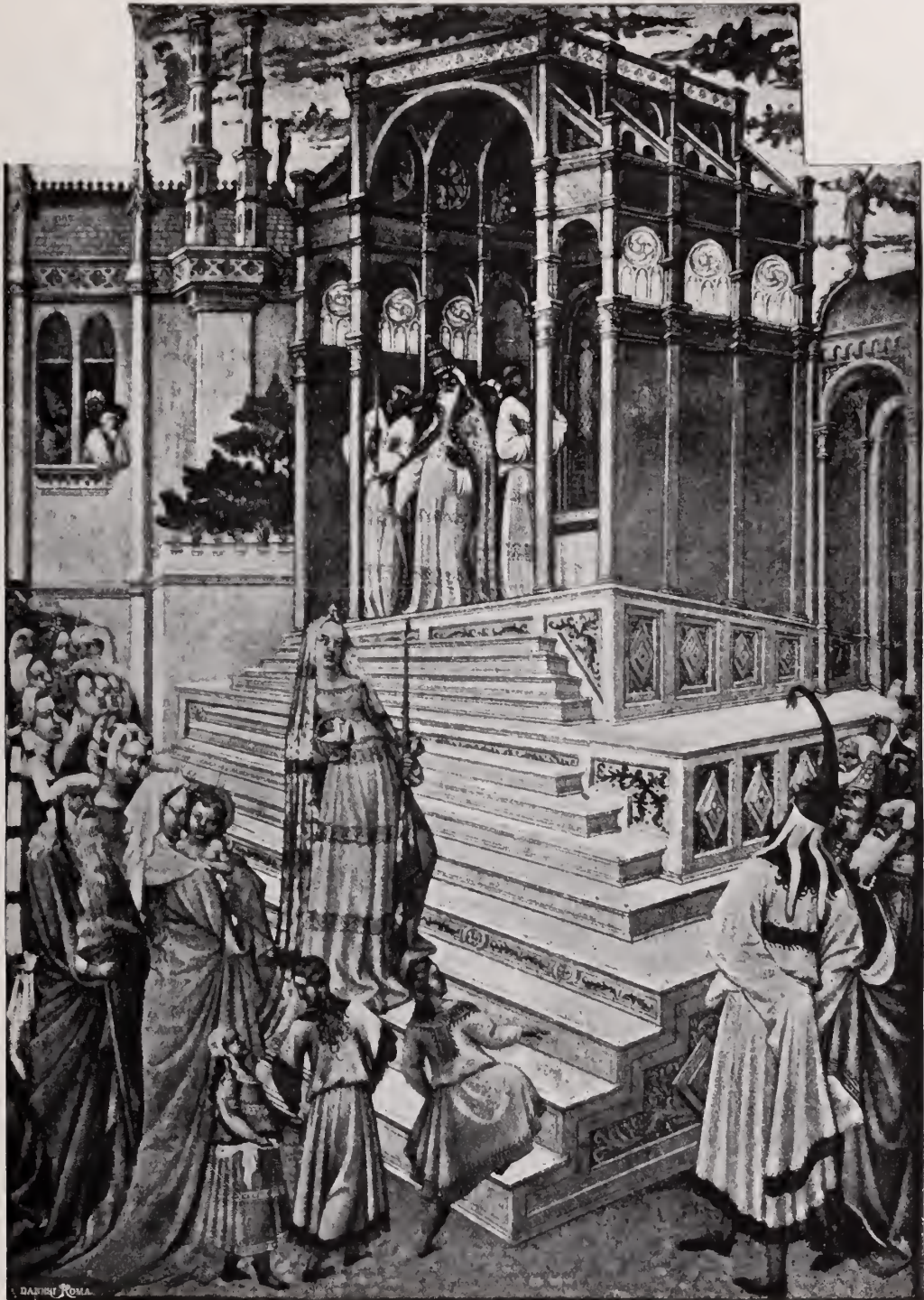
together on the steps, the daughter takes leave of them, and little children look on in wonder. Amongst Giotto's successors the scene gradually gains in solemnity, but loses the character of noble simplicity, the unity and space of his composition. That scene becomes somewhat



ORCAGNA

[Or' San Michele, Florence]

disunited in the work of Taddeo Gaddi and Giovanni da Milano, but less so in that of Gaddi, which shows all eyes and hearts, and the lines of all the Gothic figures, directed towards Mary, who, on the fifth stair, turns to her father and mother to bid them farewell, and to tell them that she thenceforth is dedicated to Heaven. Giovanni da Milano is less intent upon the connexion of his figures than upon the circumstances



GOLDEN MANUAL OF THE DUC DE BERRY

[Chantilly]

and details of character and costume. Mary, on her way up the stair, lifting her tunic as she goes, has taken the typical and conventional form, thenceforth habitual. Sculpture had no little difficulty with the scene of the Presentation. Even Orcagna found the fifteen steps to be somewhat unmanageable. He had to work upon the front of an octagon of the tabernacle in Or' San Michele at Florence, and was obliged to give a rigorous symmetry to the composition of his bas-relief. Mary climbs the stairway, and the High Priest awaits her on the Temple threshold with levites attending him. On either hand are seen the young companions of the Virgin; one of these holds a psalter. Mary, with a book of divinity in her hand, turns midway up the stair, showing to her father and mother that temple wherein she is to dwell. This action of the Virgin's, which is not according to the text—" *Et non regressa est puella*"—was obviously a necessity of the sculptor's composition, in order that the figure should not be seen directly from the back; but art took occasion by that material obligation to express a sweet and human sentiment.



DOMENICO GHIRLANDAJO

[Santa Maria Novella, Florence]

In the "Golden Manual" of the Duc de Berry, now in the library at Chantilly, the young Virgin, turning, seems to seek with bewildered eyes

for her parents in the throng. Later, in the fifteenth century, Ghirlandajo, in Santa Maria Novella, shows her casting over her shoulder a sidelong



CARPACCIO

[Brera Gallery, Milan]

glance at her parents, as though she confessed her pain at the sacrifice. Hitherto Mary has been represented of an age at which, according to the Byzantine idea, might be manifested the precocious intelligence, the sudden development of womanhood in her who was predestined to so great things. But the art of Italy corrected, with its new naturalism, this symbolical convention; and Bazzi (usually called Sodoma) follows the ancient text of the apocryphal gospel, and represents a child of some three years old, who leaves her mother, while the High Priest guides her steps, and a group of women, wearing something of the beauty of the women of Leonardo da Vinci, stand by opposite an answering group of

men of powerful figure. The two lines of spectators seem to be gathered before a colonnade in expectation of some spectacle. The composition of Sodoma failed, however, to complete the scene ; it treated but a part, and much was neglected therein. It was at Venice that the Presentation of the Virgin became the perfect picture ; for there Carpaccio and Cima da Conegliano prepared the way for the advent of the masterpiece of Titian. Cima, in the Dresden picture, divides the scene between his country people and Orientals, and even introduces the seated figure of an old market-woman, resembling the one in Titian's Presentation, and fancifully supposed to represent the mother or the nurse of the master.



SODOMA

[Siena

Titian imagined the traditional incident to take place in presence of lofty chancellors and senators of the Venetian Republic, with a background of the Dolomite Alps of Cadore, seen beyond the porticos and Corinthian

columns of balconied buildings in variously coloured stone. The people seem to be keeping a festival. Mary, clothed in a long blue dress, her hair plaited in a tress, with a halo of light about the whole figure, holds



TITIAN

[Venice

up her little draperies to climb the Temple steps, at the head of which stands the High Priest holding out his hands to welcome her. The crowd below observes her, talks, rejoices. Anne, the mother, is in the midst of the multitude pressing at the foot of the stairway; a boy leads a dog in a leash; a senator gives alms to a poor woman holding in her arms a naked child; an old woman sits on the lowest step, pausing in her

task of counting the money just earned at market, and watches in surprise the passing of the procession to the Temple. Thus did Titian give



TITIAN

[Detail of the "Presentation," Venice

to the Syrian scene all the character of a Venetian holiday, in presence not of Pharisees, but of senators of the Serene Republic.



CIMA DA CONEGLIANO

For us modern men who would have all things according to the canons of a scrupulous archæology, truth seems to be lacking in such a work as Titian's; but not art, not the spirit of the legend. His art did not intend to withdraw from the conditions of his life and time; it is willing to forget the non-essential facts of incident, in its great work of uniting antiquity to the present, of joining religion and his own country and nation, heaven to earth, and mankind with the Divinity.



TINTORETTO

[Santa Maria dell' Orto, Venice]



BEATO ANGELICO

[Accademia, Florence

THE ESPOUSALS



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK
The Proclamation to the Young Men

THE representation of the marriage of the Virgin became a subject of art comparatively late. The apocryphal gospel, having related the birth of Mary and her retreat into the Temple, comes thus to the nuptials. Zacharias, according to the text, instructed by an angel, called together all the young men desiring to marry, and bade them bring each man a rod, God having designed by this means to make

known His choice of a bridegroom for the consecrated Virgin. Joseph, laying aside the tools of his labour, joined the number of those who were on their way to Abiathar, each young man carrying a staff. The High Priest gathered all these rods together, entered the Temple bearing them in his hand, and, having prayed there, re-appeared, and gave to each man his own again, no sign of the Divine election having then been given. Joseph was the last to take back his rod, and then was a dove seen to rest upon his head. Zacharias said to him, "Thou art chosen



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK

Mary and Joseph at Nazareth

by God to take His Virgin; take her and guard her." Joseph, however, refused, saying, "I have sons and I am an old man, whereas she is young; I would not bring on myself the derision of the sons of Israel." But the High Priest reminded him of the chastisements inflicted by God on those who refused to do His will. Joseph therefore received the Virgin and said to her, "I will take thee unto my house; then I will go to my labour, and later return to thee." Meantime the priests gathered together and said, "Let us make a veil for the Temple of the Lord." And the High Priest caused the virgins of the House of David to be called. Seven were brought to him, and then he remem-

bered that the most pure Mary was also of the family of David. He caused lots to be drawn for the name of her who should spin the threads of gold, scarlet, and true purple. To Mary fell the purple, and she took it away to spin it in her house.

Such is the legend that art had to deal with. Joseph had been re-



GIOTTO

[Padua

presented as a young man upon the sarcophagus of the basilica of St. Ambrose at Milan, and so also in the Lateran, and at Arles. Christian antiquity consistently figured him as a man in the full prime of life. In the mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, where the image of St. Joseph occurs several times, St. Joseph is in the flower of his age, though not a youth, his head crowned with abundant hair, and his clothing a tunic with long vertical stripes of blue. In a later age art,

inspired by these popular apocryphal writings, presented him as a man in decrepitude. Painters and makers of images even treated the venerable figure with some degree of ridicule, after the rough manner of the Middle Ages. He is shown tottering, full of pains, obliged to rest his palsied head upon his hand. Moreover, there is another apocryphal gospel, known as that of the Nativity, and it also represents Joseph as an aged man. Let us recall a few passages from these pages, differing, as they do, in several particulars from the Proto-Evangel or Apocryphal Gospel of St. James, already cited. The High Priest said (according to the unauthorised gospel of the Nativity), "Whoever lacks a wife, let



GIOTTO

[Padua]

him come, bringing a rod in his hand." Then Joseph came amongst the young men, and all gave their rods into the High Priest's keeping,

and they numbered about three thousand; and in the morning he gave back again to every man his rod. But there was no sign given of the



GIOTTO

[Padua

will of God. The High Priest Abiathar therefore put on the mystical vestments with twelve bells, and went into the holy place to offer sacrifice. Whilst he was there at prayer, an angel appeared to him and said, "Behold this smallest rod of all, which thou hast left aside; when thou shalt take it and restore it to him who brought it, there shall be given a sign of all things that I have foretold thee." The little rod was Joseph's, and he stood in his humility the last of all the multitude. And Abiathar called him with a loud voice and said, "Come hither and receive again thy rod, for thou art chosen." Joseph drew near, full of fear; and when he put forth his hand to take the

rod, there came from the top of it a white dove that flew for a while round the eaves of the Temple and then took its course into the cloud. All the people rejoiced with the old man and said to him, "Thou art happy in thy old age, since God has called thee to be betrothed to Mary." And the priests said to him, "Take her, for God has chosen



GIOTTO

[Padua

thee." With great misgiving Joseph answered, "I am old, and I have many sons. Why do you give me so young a bride?" Then did Abiathar remind him how Dathan and his fellow perished because they despised the will of God. "And the same thing will befall thee," he said, "if thou withstandest what God has commanded." Joseph answered, "I withstand not the will of God; I would know which one of my sons it is that should take this virgin to wife. Give her, moreover, some virgins to be her fellows and to dwell in the house with her." Then

said Abiathar, "There shall be granted her the company of certain virgins to be with her until the time when thou shalt espouse her, for none other shall have her to wife." Then did Joseph take Mary away with five other virgins that they might dwell with her in his house; and those virgins were named Rebecca, Saphora, Susanna, Abigea, and



TADDEO GADDI

[Santa Croce, Florence]

Zaele. The priests gave them silk, linen, and purple; and they drew lots amongst themselves to divide the labour of spinning, to each one her share; and the lot fell to Mary to spin the purple for the veil of the Temple.

In this legend there lingers some echo of Roman life and customs. The wool given to Mary for spinning was given also, wrapped about a distaff, to the Roman maids about to leave their fathers' house for the bridegroom's, and all the women cried out the name of the wool-basket,

as a reminder to the bride of her duties in her home, accompanying the cry with a rhythmic hand-clapping. The Archæological Museum



GIOVANNI DA MILANO

[Santa Croce, Florence]

of the city of Puy possesses a curious monument of the fourth or fifth century, which, it has been supposed, we may take to be a representation of the Espousals. It is the fragment of a sarcophagus which until 1825 was built into the Baptistery of Puy. In the midst is a sculpture of the scene of a nuptial ceremony. The bridegroom takes the hand of the maiden, who wears a veil upon her head; in the background a third figure is present—that of one who seems to

receive the vows of the bridegroom and bride; this is a beardless youth with his head crowned with a nimbus. To the left an angel appears to a man asleep, and by this sign the sculpture has been supposed to represent events in the life of St. Joseph, including the warning communicated to him in his sleep. The short tunic, which leaves uncovered the shoulder of the sleeper, is generally peculiar to



ORCAGNA

[Or' San Michele, Florence

shepherds or to slaves; but upon the bas-reliefs of sarcophagi it is seen upon the figures of Joseph and Abraham. According to Le Blant, the two scenes in question illustrate the history of St. Joseph's renunciation of the intention of privily putting away his wife; in the one scene he is re-assured by the Angel, and in the other the same



BARTOLO DI MAESTRO FREDI

[Siena]

Angel brings him to his bride, whose hand he takes in reconciliation. The reading is judicious; but if it is correct we have not here a representation, properly so called, of the Espousals of Joseph and Mary, and yet we recognise in this sculpture the embryonic form of the whole iconography of this subject. If we read the scenes from right to left (and this order is not uncommon) we may take the first scene as representing the Espousals, and the second the succeeding incident of

the apparition of the Angel to St. Joseph in a dream. The scene of the marriage has in fact the form that we are to meet with so often in later Italian art, and the truly classic figures of bridegroom and bride, joining hands, are such as we are to find repeated with many variants. The Byzantines did not limit themselves to the incident thus recorded. Nor indeed did James the Monk, in the copy of his Homilies preserved in the Vatican Library, represent the actual ceremony of marriage. He merely shows the High Priest consigning the Virgin to Joseph, and their departure to Joseph's house; Joseph walks on, loaded with the tools of his business as a carpenter, and the Virgin follows him.

The writers of the apocryphal gospels and the Greek Fathers alike assign to St. Joseph no more than the charge of guarding the virginity of Mary. The Latins, on the other hand, admit a formal nuptial ceremony. This is their interpretation of the passage of St. Luke—



OTTAVIANO NELLI

[Foligno



LORENZO DA VITERBO

[Viterbo]

"A Virgin espoused to Joseph." According to the Latin popular tradition, moreover, the rod of Joseph budded amongst the rods of his competitors, like that of Aaron of old. The Greek legend has its dove resting on the top of the rod or upon the Saint's head; the Latin has the other miracle, evidently suggested by the Old Testament incident. Both Greek and Latin have the breaking of their rods by disappointed



DOMENICO GHIRLANDAJO

[Santa Maria Novella, Florence]

suitors; we are even told of one of these, that he was the son of Abiathar the High Priest, and a *Sposalizio* exists in which this young man is in the act of attacking the envied St. Joseph, in the extremity of his annoyance, with his fist.

Giotto, in the chapel of the Scrovegni, represents the unwedded men of the House of David approaching with evident timidity a leonine old man—Abiathar the High Priest; and one amongst them most timorous of all, and the last, is Joseph, having the nimbus about his whitened head. The scenes following are those of the decision amongst the suitors, of the marriage ceremony, and of the departure homeward of bridegroom and bride. We see the sheaf of rods upon the altar,

men and women upon their knees watching with eager eyes for the granting of a sign, Priest and Levite. All these hearts are beating in the work of Giotto. Next, the miracle has come to pass; and Joseph, with his rod blossoming in the shape of a lily, stands facing the Virgin, and is about to place the ring upon her hand bestowed on him by the High Priest. Upon the lily the dove alights. Behind Joseph, the son of Abiathar lifts an envious hand to strike the chosen bridegroom; and the other disappointed bachelors stand back; one, with a beautiful and youthful dark head, snaps his rod across his knee. Again, the marriage ceremony is over, and Mary, followed by her companions as a queen by her court, takes her way to her husband's house. The "nodding minstrelsy" goes before her, flower-crowned, and from the little Gothic



BERNARDINO LUINI

[Saronno

windows of the house waves a palm. The august simplicity of Giotto lapses in the work of his successors. For example, the little chapel, or rather the little niche, in which Giotto's three first scenes take place

—the watching of the rods, the accomplishment of the miracle, and the espousals—becomes the more elaborate interior of a cloister in the work



VITTOR CARPACCIO

[Biera Gallery, Milan]

of Taddeo Gaddi, and a great hall in that of Giovanni da Milano, in Santa Croce. Both of these painters gather full crowds about the figures of the bride and bridegroom. Gaddi mingles with these crowds a number of children that have rather (according to the error of the art of the time) the proportions of minute men and women. And the degree of austerity preserved by Taddeo disappears in Giovanni, who softens the faces, and gives grace to the female figures. But the incidents are alike; and with him too the disdained and disappointed young man raises his hand to smite the bridegroom, and his fellow breaks his rod across his knee while the ceremony goes forward.

Even so does the fourteenth century treat the same theme. In Orcagna's bas-relief in Or' San Michele, Mary yields her hand to that of the High Priest, who gives it to Joseph; one envious suitor deals



FRANCIABIGIO

[The Annunziata, Florence]

the blow, another breaks his rejected rod with his foot. And the composition remained the same down to the naturalistic epoch of Italian art in the fifteenth century. Fra Angelico, in the Uffizi picture, takes a further step, and makes the spiteful son of Abiathar actually belabour



RAPHAEL

[Brera Gallery, Milan

the shoulders of St. Joseph. In so much as envy and anger are quite powerless to take possession of bodies drawn by that mild hand, and all the faces keep the expression of the painter's sweetness, this clenched fist looks somewhat like that of a child in play. But the fifteenth-century naturalism of other painters altered, as we have said, this primitive scene. It lost its religious character, and became the incident of a narrative. Lorenzo da Viterbo expressed with vigour the rage, the irony, and the spite of the young men defeated by St. Joseph. They are gentlemen and knights of the time, "taken from nature," as Nicola della Tuccia, a chronicler of Viterbo, affirms, and he himself figures as "a man of advanced age, eight-and-sixty years old, clad in peacock-blue and covered with a cloak, wearing also a round cap and black stockings." With a clearer dramatic distribution of groups, Domenico Ghirlandajo, in Santa Maria Novella, makes the suitors attack St. Joseph with a will, but the dove has disappeared from the top of the Saint's rod, and with it every touch of miracle, of reminiscence, prophecy, or symbol. Luini, moreover, allows the incident of the anger and violence of the rejected ones to rest at last; hardly does a smile move the lip of a young man whom he represents as breaking his rod in the traditional manner, and hardly does his near neighbour show a sign of annoyance. The crowd is dispersed in the *Sposalizio* of Perugino at Fano, and in the famous work of Raphael in the Brera Gallery at Milan, which is a very faithful imitation of Perugino's. St. Joseph's face is changed in the Brera picture from the old face of earlier art to a young one, and a fresh, sweet, and attractive. In this figure Raphael, copying the gentleness of his master, has something also of his melancholy, and of his slowness and timidity of gesture. A purer harmony of all parts takes the place of the contrasts of the earlier masters; and even if contrast is indicated, it is so softened as hardly to seem what it is. Italian art at this height revises and corrects the legend, taking from it all harshness, all opposition of age and youth, all violence, gibes, spites, and blows. All is made simpler, sweeter, and nobler than it had been. The ancient Jewish story becomes decorous, pleasant, and Italian. The form given by Raphael to the *Sposalizio* is final and perfect; and art, like a gem set free from the stone that imprisoned it, shines here in the sun of the Renaissance.



LEONARDO DA VINCI

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence

THE ANNUNCIATION



IVORY

Milan Cathedral

IN the obscurer recesses of the vault of the fourth cubicle of the Cemetery of Priscilla, on the injured and blackened wall, there are discernible the figure of a woman seated upon a rude chair, in the attitude of surprise, and the figure of a youth, with right hand held forth, announcing to her his message and his mission. And this is the first of all Annunciations, the earliest known form of that picture which was painted throughout the course of many centuries,

little altered, albeit affected by the movement of thought, by the phases of popular feeling, by the development of the arts, by that great development which joined the tradition of the early Church to the activity of the free Italian genius. The lowly figure of Mary, the modest handmaid of the Catacomb, is to become that of the glorified queen, of the Byzantine priestess, and finally the woman of all time in her maternal love. The praying Archangel of the Cemetery of Priscilla is to take on the heroic aspect of an antique Victory, is to fold his splendid wings in presence of the Virgin, and to change again from the satellite of the skies to a youth radiant with innocence, crowned with flowers, and sweet with smiles. Yet the composition of the Annunciation will remain all



SIXTH-CENTURY IVORY

[Chair of Maximian, Ravenna

but unaltered across the Middle Ages and the Modern, through the days of the doctrinal work of the Fathers of the Church, through those of the legends of the Christian neophytes and those of guileless popular tradition.

In the Cemetery of Priscilla there was no better way of expressing the dignity of the Virgin than by placing her in a symbolic chair; and Gabriel there has a human aspect, no wings, no traveller's staff, and no sceptre. The first Christian painters had no convention ready for the representation of beings supposed invisible, the pure spirits of the heavenly world. They were obliged to look about them in the Pagan world above-ground

for suggestions as to the

more purely artistic part of their enterprise of religious painting—an enterprise that was in many respects entirely new, and that they were to leave for prosecution to an active and progressing posterity. Perhaps they observed, or remembered, the antique representations of Telemachus in presence of Penelope, of Paris accosting Helen. This we may conjecture by the likeness of one of the Pompeian paintings to this in the Catacomb of Priscilla. Helen, like the Virgin, is seated, and Paris announces to her his ill-omened love. But here is a feminine grace, here is the pride of life; whereas the Christian painter, bearing in mind the

near teaching of the Gospels, had to withdraw from his figures those images of serenity, of power, of gaiety that accorded ill with the hearts of the poor, of persecuted people, of hidden saints, of slaves, adoring in silence and shadow their spiritual God. Thus, from a classic work of Pagan spirit the poor painter took what he could use—the action of one who brings a message, and that of one who receives a visitant. Therefore, in the unadorned cathedral of the dusty and dusky Cemetery underground, the Handmaid of the Lord sits, according to the Gospel of St. Luke, no goddess, no empress, no antique and majestic matron, beautiful and easy in gesture as she loosens from her shoulders and her breast where-with, going abroad, she had veiled her noble head and person. Mary sits humbly, and hardly stirs her left hand as she hears the Archangel say that she has

found favour with the Most High, that His power shall overshadow her, and that thereby shall be born of her a Son who shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever. The blessed one among women was troubled at the salutation of the messenger; his word was full of secrets to her ears. But the Angel sent from God set her questionings at rest, assuring her that nothing was impossible with God. And Mary answered, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word." The humble form of the interpretation of the narrative of St. Luke which produced this primitive Annunciation in the Catacomb was respected



IVORY OF THE TRIVULZIO COLLECTION

[Milan]



SARCOPHAGUS NEAR THE MONUMENT OF DANTE

[Ravenna]

during the course of centuries, although its simplicity was troubled by the practice and teaching of the Gnostics. Their legends, chanted under the palm-trees of the East, in the ears of a people ready for the miraculous, gave a new and local character and animation to the sacred story, and as it were showed art a way out of the august limitations of the austere Gospel story. Thus the apocryphal narrative of St. James, already cited, relates that Mary was in the act of drawing water from a well when she heard the "Hail, full of grace" of the announcing voice. The Virgin looked to right and left and saw not who spoke to her. Afraid, she went into the house, put down her water-vessel, and sat to spin her purple. And the Angel appeared and said to her, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God." Mary therefore thought within herself, "Shall I conceive, and shall I bring forth the Lord even as any other mother?" "Not thus," answered the Angel, "but the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and the Holy One that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." One detail of this story remained



TENTH CENTURY

traditionally in the art of succeeding centuries ; that is, Mary was represented spinning the purple for the Temple veil. As we have said, the



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK
The Virgin at the Well

manners of antiquity are reflected in this old and popular story, so continually illustrated. In the fifth-century work of the triumphal arch of



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK
Arrival of the Angel



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK
The Annunciation

Santa Maria Maggiore, erected by Sixtus III. in sign of his victory over the Nestorians, Mary is shown intent upon her labours, having at her side a basket filled with the threads of the purple. In the mosaics of the same basilica her figure is less that of the handmaid than of the Queen

of the heavenly citizens and of the realms of angels, high above every other bearing the name of creature. The crown of gems encircles her head; she is vested in heavy embroideries, and her chair is furnished with a cushion and a predella. Three angels form her court, representatives of the host of Heaven. Mary has paused in her spinning at the descent of the messenger from on high; and he, pointing up to the dove,



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK
Return of the Angel to Heaven

symbol of the Holy Spirit, salutes her reverently. These angels have doffed the aspect and character of philosophers, and appear in the guise

of satellites of the eternal sun. They wear wings in sign of their constant motion; also the nimbus, which resembles the iris, and recalls the circlet of light that crowned, according to the fable, the brow of Augustus when he entered triumphant into Rome. The other apocryphal gospel—that of the Nativity of the Virgin—represents Gabriel entering, and as he enters filling with light, the room of Mary, and describes her as well accustomed



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK

The Virgin carries the Purple to the Temple

to the faces of angels and to the apparition of the splendour of these wonderful visitants.

Between two splendid angels appears the Christian Penelope on the triumphal arch of the ancient Christian basilica, wearing the peculiar adornments of Juno, with a vestment that speaks of the East. Her figure is as it were illumined by the last faint lights of art dying out amid its ashes; and the same may be said of the forms of the bas-relief on a sarcophagus near Dante's tomb at Ravenna, and of those of an eleventh-century ivory (undoubtedly imitated from an original antique) in the Trivulzio Collection at Milan, both of these being designs representing the Annunciation. In the bas-relief is perceptible the work of a sculptor who carves the human figure under the influence of his reminiscence of classical antiquity as well as under the guidance of Christian tradition. Mary has the aspect of a

Penelope on these sarcophagi of the Roman decadence ; she spins, with her wool in a basket at her side ; and the winged Angel, bowing towards her, proffers his salutation ; no movement, however, seems to animate the figure of Mary. In the ivory of the Trivulzio Collection, which has great beauties in the expression of form under the ample draperies, Mary has her head inclined towards the messenger, whilst her body is averted as though in a trembling act of evasion before the Divine emissary. She is erect upon the predella, pausing in her labour, as though the sudden Annunciation had troubled and alarmed her, so that she withdraws within her mantle. The Angel, a tall and vigorous youth, is clad in a tunic



GEMS IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

[Paris

and a large pallium ; with the left hand he grasps the staff of a pilgrim, his action that of a warrior wielding a lance ; and with the uplifted right he points aloft ; he has wings and the nimbus, for signs of glory and celestial life. This fragment of ivory is of truly classic beauty, touched, however, by Oriental magnificence, as is shown by the ornaments of the columns in the background, and in the fringed and embroidered garment of the Virgin. It is greatly superior, as a specimen of ancient art, to the ivories of the cathedral of Maximian at Ravenna, works of the time of Justinian, in which the figures of the Annunciation group seem cut out of the mass of the draperies, losing their proportions in thin angles against the solid folds. The eyes are large and open in the Trivulzio ivory, hollowed in that of the cathedral ; the former, moreover, has delicate forms in the faces, the latter a coarse type of profile with projecting chins upon the broad cylindrical throat, in which classic art is seen upon the point of vanishing, the heroic character of the Angel, the

Juno-like character of the Virgin's figure alike passing out of sight. In expression also the Trivulzio Annunciation is much finer than the cathe-



IVORY

[Modena]

dral carving. Both of these ivories mark the determined methods of representing the mystery in art. For from the hour when the victorious Church began to tell her story, no longer on the walls of the Catacombs but in the light of day, Christian art began to define the direction and the limits of composition and expression. This troubled Virgin of the Trivulzio ivory will meet us again, in the same attitude, under the chisel of Donatello in Santa Croce; the submissive Mother we shall find perpetually amongst the paintings of the Italian Renaissance. Byzantine art preserved these types and actions with a sacred and ceremonial care, and carried them across the Middle Ages as a caravan bears treasure across



CODIX OF THE GRAND-DUCAL BIBLE

[Carlsruhe

the desert. The drawing of the human figure might suffer, ill-defended as it was against the adverse action of time and of barbarism; nay, the figure may pass into the form of a mummy, or may look as though it were struck to stone. The Virgin may gradually turn into an inexpressive idol, rigid, angular, and dry, with narrow eyes, thin cheeks, and an aspect devoid of all youthfulness. Yet the scene is not shifted; its elements are unmoved and unaltered. Even the figure of a handmaid or companion of the Virgin, who draws the curtain of the door of the holy house, so that she

may overhear the message of the Angel—a figure that may be perceived in a sixth-century ivory in the National Library of Paris—having once taken her place, keeps it by this respect for precedent; she is to be seen listening at the door, in fourteenth-century painting, at



FRESCO

[Caffarella

Siena and elsewhere. In like manner the Angel keeps the decorative hair, and the appearance therein of a fiery tongue, in remembrance of the flames which the pagans represented in the forehead of the genius; sometimes also he wears the pallium, sometimes the buskin. The antique forms were wrapped up, as though in a cocoon, for a future expansion in altered times.

Until the ninth century, art repeats, by the very force of inertia, the inherited formula, and shows the



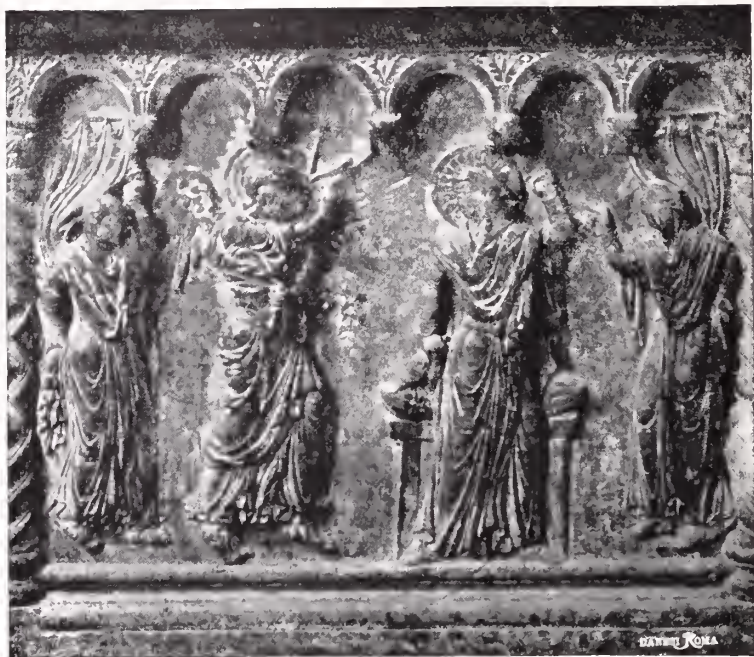
THE "EXULTET" OF CAPUA



ROMANESQUE ART (TWELFTH CENTURY)

[Fano

figure under a spectral aspect and in the semblance of a dreary dream. In the ninth century itself, in Rome, in the Annunciation of the mosaics of Saints Nereus and Achilleus, all is stiff, severe, and rigid. At the end of that age we begin to perceive a slight movement of change in the form of the representation; the figures are framed in by architecture with which they are connected by subject. Whereas in the older designs the event takes place in the open air, beside the door of



FONT

[Verona]

the regal dwelling-house of the Virgin, in the gold-work of the altar of Sant' Ambrogio, at Milan (A.D. 835), it comes to pass beneath a portico; in the benedictionary of St. Ethelwold (A.D. 984), preserved in the library of the Duke of Devonshire, the Virgin of the Annunciation is seated in a circular temple;

in an ivory in the Louvre Museum, a work of the tenth century, Mary is



MAGISTER ENRICUS

[Capital at Sant' Andrea, Pistoia]

placed beneath a hemispherical ciborium, resembling that of the throne of the Byzantine emperors. Meanwhile, in the East, art was flowering anew, preserving in its own treasury the poetic legends beloved by the people, and mingling with these some remembrance, if a slight one, of former Grecian beauty. The Homilies of James the Monk are Greek MSS., gaily decorated with illuminations and consecrated to the glory of the Virgin. Here the artist has done his best to represent in colours the incidents of apocryphal writings and popular legend.



PULPIT OF BARGA (THIRTEENTH CENTURY)

The Virgin is shown busy at the well, arrested in her work, turning her head to hear the voice of the Angel speaking to her; she re-enters the house; she seats herself upon a chair covered with white and trimmed with red and blue; she spins the sacred purple while the Angel bends the knee before her; we behold the scene in which the heavenly messenger declares to her the prophecies about to be fulfilled, the scene in which her misgivings



GUIDO DA COMO

[Pulpit at Pantano]

are expressed, and in which she resolves upon submission to the Divine will. The illuminator evidently finds variety difficult, and is apt to stereotype his incidents. The same figures re-appear, the same Virgin, the same Angel bestowing his Grecian

benediction. The artist ceases to refer afresh to the text or the legend, and tends to repetitions of his own work. Nevertheless, the heroic type, found in the age of Justinian, the animation of the action, and the delicate execution, prove that in this second age of Byzantine art unhopèd-for excellence had been reached. An attempt to discom-



GIOTTO

[The Arena, Padua]

pose these well-known groups had no consequences; but there were several arrangements to choose from, and the artist selected this or that moment from the narrative of St. Luke. Now the first surprise, the first movement attending the sound of the angelic voice, was chosen; now the moment of distress and misgiving; now the act of obedience and acceptance on the part of Mary. In some doubt as to the kind of surprise or the degree of distress, the artist of this period more ordinarily devoted himself to the third of the phases or incidents of the

Mystery ; it is less dramatic, but even for this reason more manageable by those who had their still, stiff, and intractable materials and their definite legends to work with. The Byzantines were like other painters of the early Christian schools in their frequent choice of the closing words of the Gospel narrative for illustration. But we must make an exception



GIOTTO

[The Arena, Padua]

in the case of that sculptor of Greek derivation who wrought the baptismal font of San Giovanni in Fonte at Verona (twelfth century), and who expressed with much dramatic feeling the mental trouble or misgiving of the Virgin. The Angel advances towards her, and she, risen to her feet, grasps her distaff with her right hand and lifts her left arm as though to defend herself, turning on her left foot away from the Angel as though about to leave him. This vivid scene is represented beneath the turning arches under the lip of the font. It is

enclosed between curtains drawn by two female figures which lean upon the twisted columns forming the limits of the face of the font. Whilst Byzantine art in its flower gave this representation of the Biblical history, Romanesque art, as in the Church of Sant' Andrea at Pistoia, amid the sculpture of a capital of the doorway, carved its figures with an almost savage character. At Fano, in a bas-relief of the cathedral, now in the Archiepiscopal palace, they are wrapped roughly in rude clothing. They are rude, and cut out as though with blows of a



MOSAIC

[Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome

hatchet, on the pulpit at Barga, near Lucca (thirteenth century). Here the Archangel holds his long staff as he stands near the Virgin. At their feet kneels the inquisitive handmaiden. On the pulpit of Guido da Como at San Bartolommeo in Pantano, also of the thirteenth century, the Virgin assumes a sweet and modest form; and the Angel, also a gentle creature, holds in his hand a scroll – the antique symbol reappearing in this monument which seems to resound softly with the new Italian speech.

Our Italian art, rising upon the threshold of the fourteenth century, undertook to indicate and illustrate the sacred mysteries of the Gospel

narrative without the aid of symbolic forms, and, moreover, without the addition of the detailed incidents added to the Biblical history by the apocryphal gospels. Aware of the difficulties of expression, the Italian artist accompanied his design with the very words of the Angel and the replies of the Virgin, cut upon the stone or written on the painting; as Dante describes

the Herald Angel carved upon the shore of the first circle of Purgatory bearing the message of peace and reconciliation, and represented there with so sweet a gesture that he seemed to be speaking the "Ave Maria," and Mary as in the act of answering "Ecce Ancilla Dei." Dante adds the words to these carven figures; the image of the Angel is not silent for him, and the Virgin bears the seal of her submissive answer:



ATTRIBUTED TO GIOTTO

[The Vatican

"Come figura in cera si suggella"

("As a figure is impressed in wax").

Lippo Memmi in the Annunciation of the Uffizi Gallery, and Taddeo Bartolo at Siena in the Academy, wrote the words of the angelic salutation, directed from the mouth of the messenger to the right ear of the Virgin. Orcagna inscribed upon the open book in the lap of Mary, her humble answer; Andrea Pisano, at Santa Croce, unfolded within the hands of the Angel the scroll bearing the words of the Divine decree, and places in the hands of Mary a book inscribed with her reply. Agnolo Gaddi draws up before the Angel who gives the blessing the letters that form his message, whilst the Virgin rejoins with one hand upon her breast, and with the inscription in an open book in the other. Giovanni Balducci gives to Gabriel a tablet with the angelical salutation in Gothic letters, and within a book close to the Virgin he writes "Ecce Ancilla Domini." Lastly, the painter of the Annunciation in Sant' Alessandro at Brescia writes the words opposite to the half-open mouth of the Angel, but in inverse order, so that "Ave" is the furthest removed.

Dante, in another part of his poem, completes his image of the

Annunciation, where he hears in Paradise, within the light of the lesser circle, a still small voice,

"Forse qual fu dall'angelo a Maria"

("Perhaps such as was the Angel's who spoke to Mary"); and where, in the garden of Paradise, he sees that rose within which the Divine Word took flesh. Perhaps he remembered the Latin poet of the twelfth century who had sung: "The golden rose, fallen from the fields of Paradise into the Virgin's bosom, took root therein. In virginal seclusion and in the cloister of modesty, did the Virgin accept that angelic rose." Dante again causes Piccarda Donati and the Angel Gabriel to sing the "Ave Maria" in the highest heaven, the Angel abiding before the face of Mary,

"Dinanzi a Lei le sue ali distese"

("Before her with unfolded wings"). The whole celestial court replies to that divine song; and Dante asks of St. Bernard what Angel was this who looked into the eyes of the Queen of Heaven and seemed to be turned to fire for love of her. And Bernard answers Dante:

"Baldezza e leggiadria

*Quanta esser può in angelo ed in alma,
Tutta è in lui, e sì volem che sia,*

*Perchè egli è quegli che portò la palma
Giù a Maria quando il figliuol di Dio
Carcar si volle della nostra salma"*

("Sweetness and joyance, as great as may abide in any angel or in any soul, are in him, as we should desire them to be; for this is he who bore the palm to Mary what time the Son of God was minded to take our flesh upon Him").

Instead of the pilgrim's staff or the regal sceptre of the Byzantines, Dante places the palm in the hand of Gabriel, as the sign of victory over death and of eternal life. And the palm appears in art in a certain number of examples, such as the Annunciation in San Domenico at



ATTRIBUTED TO
GIOTTO
The Vatican

Arezzo, or that in Sant' Alessandro at Brescia. Lippo Memmi and Taddeo Bartoli assign to the Angel an olive branch; but soon after,



SIMONE DI MARTINO

Uffizi Gallery, Florence

and in the course of the fourteenth century, the painters fix their choice upon a stem of lilies. This becomes the attribute of the announcing Archangel; and it was probably derived from the lily sceptre which Gabriel, as messenger of God, bore for a token of imperial authority. As though to record some such origin, Orcagna gave to the lily-stem a shape like that of the regal sceptre. It is a sceptre with opening buds upon it, and the Angel dedicates the clear blossoms to her who was hailed by David and the Patriarchs "the Lily of the Valleys." The poetry of Christian art improved upon the literalism of the Middle Ages, and lavishes flowers upon the beautiful image of Mary. So as to give visible shape to the fancies of poets, who compare her to the

flowers they would heap at her feet, the art of the fourteenth century begins to represent pots with plants in them, vases filled with flowers, placing them at the sides of the sacred groups; and the fifteenth-century



TADDEO GADDI

[Santa Croce, Florence]

painters spread a field of wild flowers before the Virgin, herself styled, in the song of Christendom, a field of spices and a garden of delights.

The figure of Mary itself, altered by the ardour of the Trecento, takes a book in place of the purple thread and the distaff, and kneels devoutly at a praying-stool. This new artistic arrangement was derived, it is true, from the distant apocryphal scriptures, and from their assertion

that the days of Mary in the Temple were passed in prayer from day-break until the third hour, in manual labour from the third to the ninth hour, and after the ninth hour in prayer resumed, in meditation upon



AGNOLO GADDI

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

the law of God, and in the singing of the Psalms of David. On the coming of Gabriel clad in the vesture of a priest and offering her the homage of bended knee and of his immortal salutation, the Virgin (according to this conception) ceases from reading in her book, which she still holds on her knee half closed with one hand, whilst the other, laid upon her breast, expresses her submission to the will of God. And the

Eternal Father is symbolised in the act of benediction, within an aureole surrounded with angels; from His mouth darts a ray of golden light upon which flies the Dove of the Holy Spirit towards the ear of the Virgin. Tertullian had said that the Word went forth from God as a ray of light, the Christian hymnologists had named Mary the gate of light, and had sung her conception of the Son by a shadow or a breath from God; and Peire de Corbiac, taking his inspiration from the Latin hymns, in his song upon the Lady Queen of Angels, tells how "*intra*



TADDEO DI BARTOLO

[Accademia, Siena]

bels rais quan solelha per la fenestra veirina" ("the fair rays entered in as the sun shines in at a window of glass"). The painters of the fourteenth century, in order, to manifest and explain the mystery, represent the



FRESCO IN SANTA MARIA NOVELLA, FLORENCE (FOURTEENTH CENTURY)



BAS-RELIEF AT ORVIETO (FOURTEENTH CENTURY)

Eternal Father somewhat as is done in the scene of the Creation, within a circle whence fly tongues of flame, whilst the mystic Dove hovers below like a swallow over the waters. The Eternal Father—a symbolic figure



SPINELLO ARETINO

[Arezzo]

which displaced that of the Prometheus of ancient art—lifts from the cloud or from an aureole a hand which is the sign of Divine intervention. Meanwhile the expression of the faces becomes more significant; serene and modest is that of the Virgin of Giotto as she receives the heavenly message in the chapel of the Scrovegni at Padua; pensive is the look



FRA GUGLIELMO DA PISA

[Pulpit at Pistoia



SPINELLO ARETINO

[Arezzo

of the Virgin of Taddeo Bartoli in the triptych of the Accademia at Siena. The attitude of the figure of Mary in the bas-reliefs in the



GIO. BALDUCCI

[San Casciano

cathedral of Orvieto is that of retreat; and attitude and expression alike



ORCAGNA

[Or' San Michele



SCHOOL OF THE PISANI

[Santa Croce, Florence]



ANDREA DI JACOPO OGNABENE

[Pistoia]



SCHOOL OF THE PISANI

[Santa Croce, Florence]



PISANELLO

[Verona



PISANELLO

[Verona



BRESCIAN WORK (EARLY FIFTEENTH CENTURY)

[Brescia



FRA ANGELICO



[Perugia



FRA ANGELICO

{St. Mark's, Florence

denote trouble and misgiving in the picture of Lippo Memmi in the gallery of the Uffizi; here, standing as a noble image of chastity, Mary attends with manifest fear to the words of the Archangel; she closes her mouth and turns her head, lifting with one hand her mantle as though to hide herself. The chamber of the Annunciation retains the ancient regal character; the pavements are of marble, or are covered with Oriental textures, the curtains are worked with gold, the furniture is inlaid and carved. Mary appears with a diadem of jewels upon her fair hair, with an ornate vesture, with a fringed mantle, with a radiant nimbus about the head. In such wise, in the fourteenth century, did they honour the image; and even though the desire to give it the look



FRA ANGELICO

[Florence

of actuality and possibility led to some realism, realism itself was noble and pure. Antiquity was imitated now and then in the design of the

action of the speaking Angel, although in general there was less than antique boldness in that action, but rather the timidity of one who



FRA ANGELICO

[St. Mark's, Florence]

brings an infinitely august message ; the Angel lifts his hand to announce his words, or to bless the listening Virgin, or else he folds his arms over his breast as he bends the knee. Mary, more humble and more exalted than any other creature, as Dante proclaims her, hears him upon her own folded knees. Thus did art soften the sacred figures of the Archangel and the Woman, investing them with piety and with a human simplicity.

In the fifteenth century the painter's conception attempted something

more natural still, nearer to the fact. Beato Angelico alone, in his Annunciations, in the church of the Gesù at Arezzo, in the convent of St. Mark in Florence and elsewhere, seemed to withstand the tendency of art away from the symbolism of the mystics. The pious friar reduced to a minimum the accessories of his compositions, but did not efface



DONATELLO

[Santa Croce, Florence]

them altogether. He could not get rid of all signs of the actual place wherein the scene he depicted came to pass. He usually chose a golden background, or placed his figures under the portico of a cloister, bare of ornament, by the entrance of a little cell that has a window barred with iron. His Madonna, upon a wooden seat, bends her head forward in a kind of trance, and folds her arms over her breast, whilst opposite to her, in equal lowliness, the Archangel bends the knee, bearing no traditional lily, and looking like a young novice from the cloister. In another Annunciation in St. Mark's (that on the upper part of the tabernacle), the Madonna might be mistaken, owing to her uplifted eyes,



PIER DELLA FRANCESCO

[Arezzo]

for the Madonna of a Coronation. The mysticism that bows down human figures, anoints them with chrism, transfuses them with light, can yet not remove them from the earth; and Fra Angelico in his



PIER DELLA FRANCESCA

[Perugia]

attempt lost something of the humility combined with greatness sung by Dante. Angelico attributed to Mary nothing but humility when he placed her on her knees before the Angel within a cloister. But Donatello, in Santa Croce, without seeking too much for the abstraction, gave to the Virgin a supernal beauty, and, in his sculpture in *pietra serena*, refined upon the type already existing in the reliefs of the cathedral of

Orvieto. Mary retires, the bust in perspective, the head bent towards the Angel as though she were persuaded by the gentle words of greeting, had overcome her first surprise, and were prepared to obey; and Gabriel



FILIPPO LIPPI

[Rome

in the act of homage is moved as he caressingly gives utterance to the Divine will. This, moreover, is the dramatic form chosen by Sandro Botticelli and Lorenzo di Credi in the Uffizi pictures, by Ghirlandajo in the fresco of Santa Maria Novella, and by Francia in his picture in the Brera Gallery. Botticelli and Ghirlandajo both brought the Angel nearer to Mary, in order to signify their colloquy, and to give more animation to the encounter; indeed the Angel of Botticelli comes so suddenly into the presence of the Virgin that she is startled in her prayer, holds her

head down as though in trouble, and her hands open before her in surprise. In the more tranquil work of Ghirlandajo the rose-crowned messenger blesses the Virgin in Santa Maria Novella, and Mary listens and bows her acquiescence quietly.

Filippo Lippi, who painted so many Annunciations, was inspired less dramatically in the compositions to which he gave his own peculiar



BOTTICELLI

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

gentleness, freshness, and grace. Amongst the others we recall the picture lately at Bagno a Ripoli, now in the possession of Henriette Herz in Rome. Here is seen the Angel, a boy-Angel, crowned with roses, presenting his stem of lilies to the Virgin, who receives it timidly. And as in these religious scenes the men of the fifteenth century united themselves with the immortals to make a single family, the donors of the



FILIPPO LIPPI

[Florence]

Annunciation of Filippo Lippi are contemplative witnesses of the heavenly mystery. This intrusion of social life into the region of the legends of the Saints, into the history of the New and Old Testaments, and before the throne of Divinity itself, distinguishes the art, and especially the



ANDREA DELLA ROBBIAS

[Casentino]

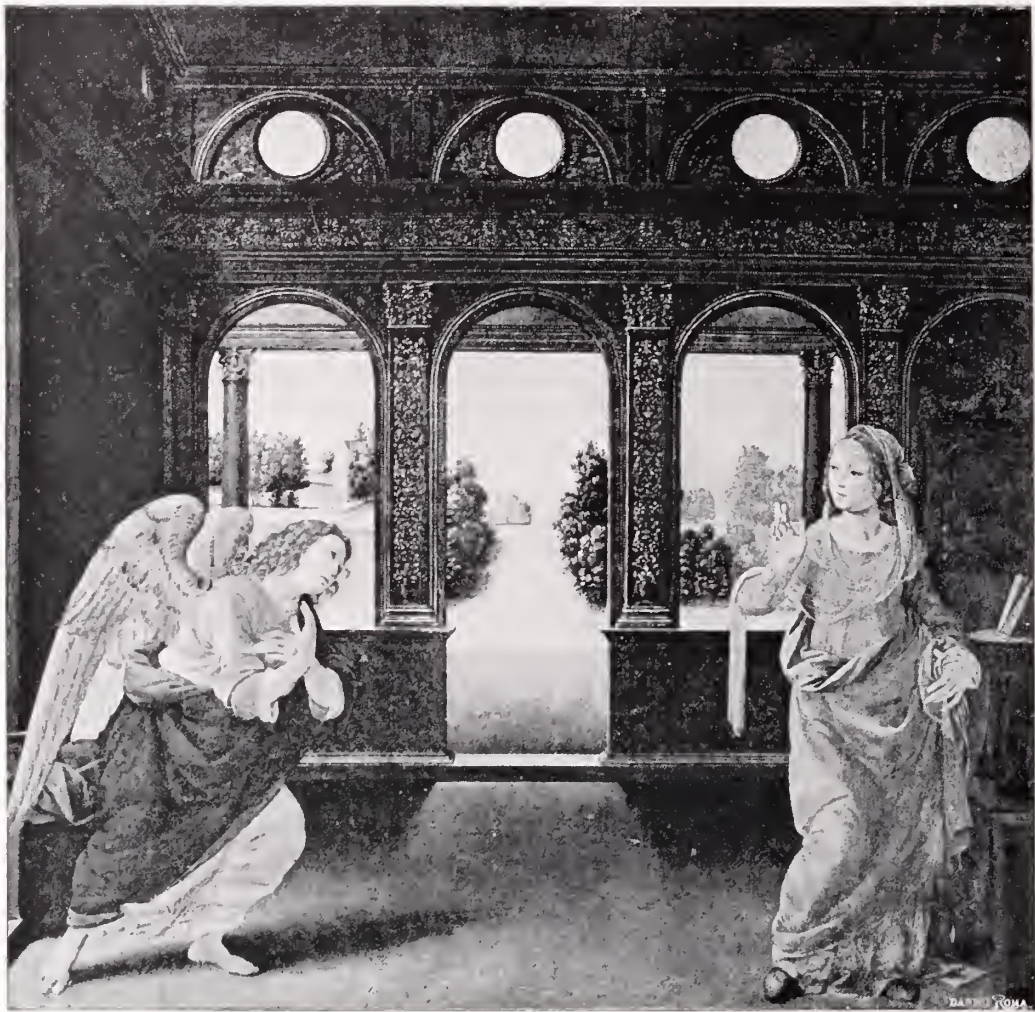
Florentine art, of the fifteenth century. Even out of Tuscany, however, we find now and then the introduction of human figures into sacred scenes. Antoniazio Romano, for instance, in the church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, in Rome, interrupts the Annunciation by the entrance of young girls presented by a monk to the Virgin, who benignantly hands them



ANDREA DELLA ROBBIÀ

[Hospital of the Innocents, Florence]

purses for their marriage-portions; the Angel speaks meanwhile; the Eternal Father gives His benediction; the mystic Dove flies towards



LORENZO DI CREDI

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

the Virgin, who places her disengaged hand upon her breast, albeit somewhat distracted by her alms-deeds in regard to the maidens. Above all, moreover, the great Leonardo, still in his youth, paints (in the Uffizi picture) a Virgin of the Annunciation in the guise of a Florentine lady listening in a flowery garden to the first avowal of love spoken by a gentle youth of that city, who kneels to her between the silent cypresses, and lifts upon her eyes of devotion.

Thus the clear, simple, and intelligible subject of the Annunciation, albeit its form of representation had not changed greatly in the course of

transmission from antique art and mythical incidents, had altered altogether in expression, undergoing many changes even in its Christian career. The empress of the primitive mosaic of Santa Maria Maggiore, the Byzantine priestess, the mystical young Virgin of the Middle Ages are transformed into noble, elegant, womanly personages marked with the character of this or that city of Italy. The development of this subject in art was not equal, however, in the various schools; for the youthfulness



BENEDETTO BONFIGLI

[Perugia]

of the Tuscans, their tenderness, and their eager love of beauty remained all their own. At Perugia Bonfigli introduced a seated St. Luke between



PERUGINO

[Montefalco]



PERUGINO

[Montefalco]

the Virgin and the Archangel; the Evangelist is in the act of writing, as though to signify his authority in the Gospel narrative; a pupil of Cosmè, in the Lombardi Collection at Ferrara, introduces in the back-



DOMENICO GHIRLANDAJO

[Santa Maria Novella, Florence]

ground of the Annunciation the well wherefrom, according to the apocryphal gospel, the Virgin was in the act of drawing water when for the first time she heard the voice of the Archangel. Without multiplying examples, we may say that where art has not the movement and the life of the Florentine character the reminiscences of antiquity are apt to reappear amidst new and naturalistic incidents, but are vaguely recalled,



[Villa Albani, Rome

PERUGINO



as the recollections of infancy in the mind of a man of full age recur half-effaced by time. In the more provincial or minor schools, too, the traditions of the fourteenth century lingered longest, as things shed and out-worn gather in corners where the hurrying wind does not pass through



FRANCIA

[Brera Gallery, Milan]

to sweep them out. So whilst, in Florence, Leonardo and others suppress the symbolic figure of the Eternal Father in the aureole, as well as the mystic Dove, with other characteristics of the fourteenth-century Annunciation, not only do these figures and incidents remain, but as though they did not sufficiently demonstrate the fact of the Incarnation, and as though the golden ray entering the Virgin's ear did not sufficiently convey the Divine Word, the Infant Jesus also is added, and not only this unborn Infant but His cross also; He walks towards His Mother upon a golden



FILIPPINO LIPPI



[San Gimignano]

ray. Generally we find the symbol of the Father amid clouds or in a rainbow, the mystic Dove with a nimbus, and nearer, turned towards the Virgin, the Infant with His cross. This is the arrangement in the picture by Giovanni Santi in the Brera, in that of Domenico Panetti in the Athenæum at Ferrara, in that of Loschi in a church at Carpi, in that of Francesco Bianchi Ferrari in the Estense Gallery at Modena, and in



ANTONELLO GAGINI

[Castroreale]

other works of minor centres. It was at one time surmised that this method of representation was a sign of the heresy of the Valentinians, who held that the Second Person of the Trinity had taken flesh in Heaven; but we may rather believe that it was no more than an insistence, an afterthought, intended to enforce the orthodox doctrine yet more surely upon the minds of the people. Ottaviano Nelli, in the Trinci Palace at Foligno, goes so far as to turn the ray from the Virgin's ear and to direct it to her breast. And all other particulars grow in turn realistic, as the scene—the place—loses the majestic ancient character to assume that of elegant life in the fifteenth century. Francesco del Cossa, in the Annunciation of the Dresden Gallery, paints a little window



GIOVANNI SANTI

[Brera Gallery, Milan

with round bottle-glass, a house with an open gallery, a ruined tower, a dog, and a snail that makes a trail on the pavement. And Carlo Crivelli,



PANETTI

[Ferrara]

in his splendid picture in the National Gallery, represents the Virgin in the interior of a lordly house, with the hundred-eyed peacock upon its



ANTONELLO GAGINI

[Monte San Giuliano]



CARLO CRIVELLI



MARIOTTO ALBERTINELLI

[Florence



GIROLAMO DEL PACCHIA

[Siena



GIROLAMO DEL PACCHIA

[Siena

cornice, with an open gallery aloft from which tissues hang, with pots of flowers upon the parapet, and doves perching upon rods that range horizontally from hooks fastened to the wall. The Virgin kneels, and



ANDREA DEL SARTO

[Pitti Palace, Florence]

behind her are the curtains of the ornate flowered bed, its embroidered counterpane, its white quilt, its soft pillows, like those of a doll's house; on two wooden brackets rests a table with vases, pots, books, a glass bottle, a candlestick, a box, and dishes of majolica. A window, iron-barred, with pots in plants upon the sill, lights the decorous chamber of Mary. Before the house runs a street that leads to an archway, beyond which stands a machicolated wall. In the foreground of the



ANDREA DEL SARTO

[Pitti Palace, Florence]

street kneels the herald of Heaven ; he has a twisted feather fastened to the jewel that adorns his hair, a necklace of gold ; plumes open upon his shoulder, and acanthus-leaves ; he raises his right hand in benedic-



TITIAN

[Cathedral, Treviso]

tion, while the young Emidius, Bishop and patron of Ascoli, seems to interrupt the Archangel in order to recommend to him the turretted city that he holds within his hands. Further off, men and women go on their way and stop to talk ; on the terrace of the arch one man reads a paper to another. Before the house facing the Virgin's a child wearing a little



PAOLO VERONESE

[Uffiz Gallery, Florence



GAUDENZIO FERRARI

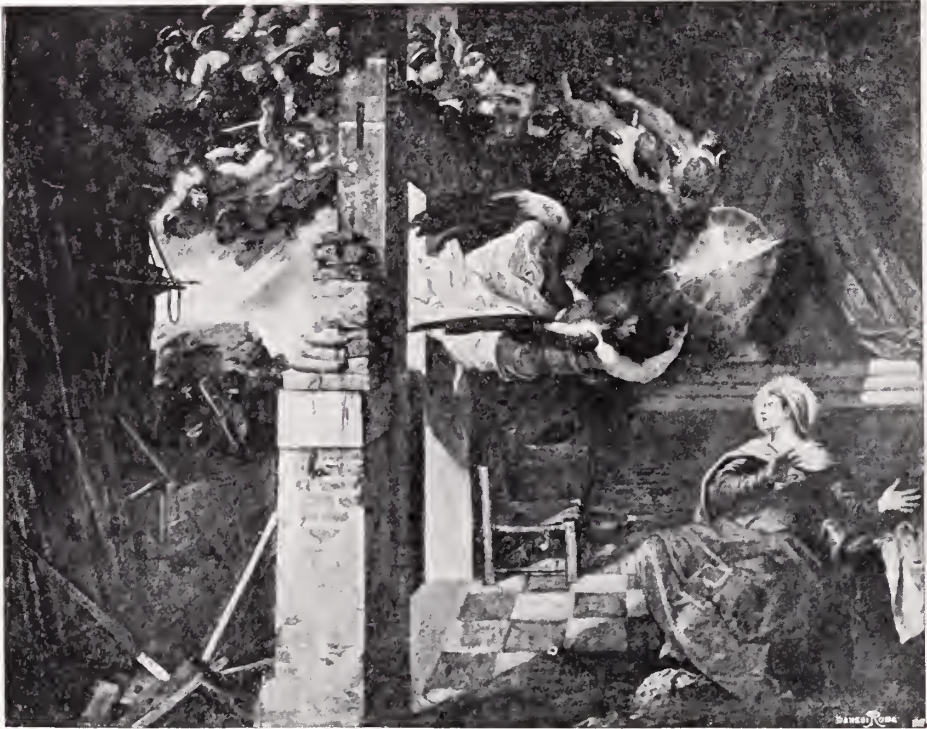
[Layard Gallery, Venice



PAOLO VERONESE

[Accademia, Venice

cap thrusts forth a curious head at the top of a little flight of stairs, and behind him two monks converse with a gentleman. Meanwhile from between two garlands of angels a golden ray darts from the sky, and shoots through the eye of a window in the frieze of the Virgin's house, and enters her chamber, bearing the mystic Dove that flies to Mary with open wings. Carlo Crivelli thus told the story of the religious mystery



TINTORETTO

of the Annunciation to the people of Ascoli, who might see their own customs, their own patron, their own life in this brilliant picture of smiling colours. The Virgin's house is in the most magnificent style of the Renaissance, with decorations from capital to base of the pilasters, and those capitals and the frieze inspired by Roman art. In like manner, in Cossa's painting the five marbles and the holy-water stoup near the Virgin show a study of classic style. Evident is the contrast between the simple life of the Virgin and the splendour of architecture. Later, in the sixteenth century, that contrast ceased, when the Virgin appeared majestic in a stately palace. Only Lorenzo Lotto at Recanati represents her as a humble woman in a humble house, and paints a veritable interior with

the eager entrance of the Archangel, who has an energetic gesture, whilst the Eternal Father holds out His hands to the elect Virgin. She kneels, with eyes fixed upon the distance, with open hands held before her, as though her heart were beating within her at the bruit of the rushing wings, and at the sound of the salutation of the messenger—a little cat runs from the noise. On the shelf stand a book, a candle, and other things; from the cornice hangs a cloth, and in the wall opens a little window with small panes of glass. Although this religious scene has become the subject of pictures of *genre*, yet the supernatural element still meets the human, and contends with it in the composition. There is the contrast of human life with the miracle, the interruption of the daily ways of nature, the encounter of the ideal and the real.

The sixteenth century received from the fifteenth the subject and the composition so long used, so long beloved, but cared little for them. The simplicity and the clarity of the mystical scene could not delight painters in search of the wonderful and the splendid, the monumental and the complex. The fifteenth-century painters, like those of the late fourteenth century, combined their Annunciations with their Gothic altars; they wrote *Ave Maria* on the golden nimbus of the Angel, or on the golden hem of the Virgin's mantle. The people, looking upon the painting, recognised that beginning of the work of human redemption which they celebrated also in their daily prayers, and in the *Angelus* prayers drawn up by the Church in the time of Calixtus III. The scene was, in their eyes, the first chapter of their sacred reading, the prologue to every work of religious art. But the sixteenth century abandoned the rhythm of the two simple figures, which seemed too pure and plain for the altered taste. The attempt to refine upon them showed a misappreciation of their true modesty. As though in a church, filled for a time by the single voice of the organ, a complex concert of various instruments should begin to sound, the steady altar-lights should be darkened by a storm of incense, and all that was quiet should be broken into fire and noise, so in the altered art of this time solemnity was sought by theatrical means, effect was brought about by clamour. In his picture at the Florence *Accademia*, Mariotto Albertinelli keeps to the Donatellian type of the Virgin, even mitigating somewhat the original vivacity and gesture, but he places other angels in the *cortège* of Gabriel, and assembles in the skies a throng of praying and music-making angels; these fly in at the

window, and make a corona aloft about the figure that symbolises the Eternal Father, Who stands upright amongst the clouds amid rays, straight and lightning-shaped, giving His benediction. These painters make of the Annunciation an apotheosis of the Virgin, such as those of the preceding centuries had kept for the Assumption or the Coronation, when the Mother was to be revealed in glory, lifted up amongst the choirs of angels and the blessed. More simple in composition is Sodoma at Siena, but his Virgin, with her ample and matronly shape, hardly looks like the young Mother-Maid; nor does Paolo Veronese's at Venice, exuberant with life, with light, and with flesh. His angels fly from Heaven to the vast corridors, to the marble terraces, to the magnificent colonnades; and the mystical Dove, which formerly came down upon a thread of gold or a simple cloud, seems now to scatter light upon all sides, and the clouds come down, charged with living forms, to overshadow Mary.

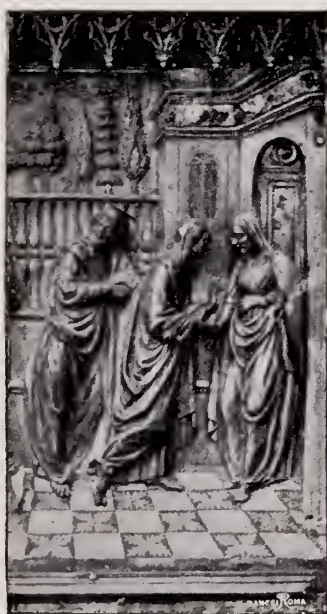
More simply does Titian express the sacred mystery in the Treviso Cathedral. Mary, a most lovely woman, kneels upon the marble pavement, and turns with a languid expression towards Gabriel, who runs to her, as it were, singing, and as a child to a mother. The august Archangel becomes here a boy, an unconscious messenger of Annunciation, Mary looks as though the promise of maternity had made her heart leap, and had thrilled with hope her beautiful frame. She is not here the mystical rose, but evidently the womanly ideal of Titian. The divine ray does not reach her in the form of a thread of gold, but bursts richly from the skies and floods her with light. Italian art, in its effort to render beautiful the face of the Virgin, and to show her at once celestial and human, seems to express its hope, and the hope of ages, for the return of justice upon earth, with truth and peace.



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK

[National Library, Paris]

THE VISITATION



BERNARDO CENNINI

[Cathedral, Florence]

THE Visitation of the Virgin to St. Elizabeth follows immediately upon the Annunciation in the Gospel narrative. We read that, after the message of the Angel, Mary arose and went in haste towards the mountain-city of Juda. She entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth, who, greatly moved, cried out — “Blessed art thou amongst women! Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?” Mary replied with the hymn that we call by its first word in the Latin version, *Magnificat*. After abiding with Elizabeth for three months, Mary went back to her own home. In order to illustrate this history as St. Luke tells it, art shows us the Virgin just released from her cousin’s embrace, filled

with the prophetic spirit, speaking or singing the *Magnificat*, and conscious of the multitudes who are to call her blessed throughout the earth.

The Byzantines even represented her holding her own soul in the form of an infant girl in her hands and offering it in an ecstasy to God—



IVORY (PROBABLY OF THE TENTH CENTURY)

[The Louvre

Magnificat anima mea Dominum; and the little soul stretches out her arms to the Father, Who bends from Heaven to receive her praises.



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK

In Eastern art, on the other hand, the incident has been simply presented, as a meeting and greeting of the two women. The celebration of the Visitation in the Church as a festival dates from the seventh century, but its representation in art is found in sixth-century work in the chair of Maximian at Ravenna. It has been a constant subject in art in all the centuries succeeding. In the mediæval representations we find a serving-maid who lifts a curtain from before the doorway or threshold of the scene of meeting. In the Homilies of James the Monk, of the eleventh century, several moments are illustrated: the setting-out of Mary; her stopping to rest on the road in a garden planted with small trees, red and blue; the salutation and embrace of Mary and Elizabeth; and finally the leave-taking. The West, less given to analysis, did not divide the story thus into several acts and fragments, and did not discompose its august



TWELFTH CENTURY

[Fano]



GIOTTO

[Assisi]

simplicity. Giotto rendered the incident monumentally. In the lower church at Assisi he paints a scene of rocks and little trees, the Virgin followed by two gentlewomen and by two handmaids carrying baskets and other burdens; Mary moves majestically, and looks the inspired



GUGLIELMO DA PISA

[Pistoia]

prophetess, as she begins her canticle; Elizabeth bows with arms held forth; and behind the two women, whose heads are encircled by the nimbus, a damsel smiles and seems to rejoice in the coming of the guests; the Gothic house is adorned by a little balcony, bearing a plant from which stems of white flowers spring. In like manner is the scene painted at Padua, although there it has less the appearance of a festival, although both the Virgin and her maids wear a thoughtful expression, and Elizabeth looks into the eyes of her visitant as one who hopes to read a mysterious thought. More homely is the conception of the Visitation at Assisi, as it is more religious at Padua, where the two



TADDEO GADDI

[Santa Croce, Florence



ANDREA PISANO

[Baptistry Gate, Florence



[Cathedral, Orvieto



VITTORE CARPACCIO

[Venice



DOMENICO GHIRLANDAJO

[Santa Maria Novella, Florence

blessed Women seem to be clasping one another in silence, exchanging mutely the confidences of the spirit. At Assisi, Mary has the look of one who has a mental vision of prostrate generations calling her blessed. The early Middle Ages had chosen to represent her as an *Orante* or as one offering her soul up to God, supported by the Prophets. Giotto,



ANDREA DI JACOPO D'OGNABENE

[Pistoia]

on the contrary, puts symbols aside, and places the mystery in her face, displayed in the midst of his picture as that of a sibyl. A painter of the school of the Pisani, at Orvieto, places behind the Virgin an old serving-woman carrying the wallets of the journey, and behind Elizabeth a young waiting-maid drawing a curtain for the new-comers. Friar Guglielmo of Pisa, at Pistoia, places two women at the side of the principal group. Thus at first the two protagonists stood alone, later they were accompanied by their households, and in the late fifteenth-century paintings Zacharia is with Elizabeth, and St. Joseph with Mary. The embrace of the two cousins grows more affectionate and impulsive,



MARIOTTO ALBERTINELLI

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence

whereas the early painters had been satisfied with making it express the somewhat ceremonial friendship of two mothers. Sodoma, in the sixteenth century, attempted something warmer—the devotion, the veneration



ANDREA DELLA ROBBIÀ

[Pistoia

of Elizabeth towards the young Mary, who on her side tenderly raises her cousin from the bent knee. The scene takes place in the apse of a temple, between two groups of spectators, and takes on a character of stateliness; not of more stateliness, nevertheless, than Mariotto Albertinelli brought about by means merely of two figures meeting in a tranquillity less resembling the spirit of Sodoma than that of Fra Bartolomeo, whose companion and friend was Albertinelli. His Virgin,



SCHOOL OF SEBASTIANO DEL PIOMBO

[Venice

holding one hand to her breast, greets Elizabeth and grasps her right hand with her own, whilst the face of Elizabeth and her eyes are alight with the purest joy; their faces come near, they are about to kiss. A similar composition was that of Andrea della Robbia at Pistoia, where



SODOMA

[Siena

Elizabeth is seen bending her knee, and looking intently upon Mary, who gently stoops to raise her. Sodoma and Andrea della Robbia seek alike to express the unselfish and unambitious reverence of Elizabeth by showing her upon her knees. The familiar though grave meeting of the two women takes a more definite character as a sacred mystery. Elizabeth exalts her who was blessed amongst women, and Mary walks solemnly towards the goal that awaits her according to the declaration of the Archangel. The two womanly hearts beat together; a secret joy casts one mother into the arms of the other; both together glorify God.

THE ANXIETIES OF JOSEPH



IVORY

[Ravenna

CLOSE upon the scene of the Visitation follows, especially in Byzantine art, the incidents of the distress of St. Joseph, who, finding his bride in expectation of her Child, is minded to put her away privily. To the following story of the Gospel the apocryphal gospel of St. James adds that Joseph wept and was in tribulation, and after his reassurance by the Angel was accused by a scribe before the High Priest, who causes him to drink, in company with Mary, the water of ordeal, the bitter water commanded by the law of Moses. Joseph and Mary passed the ordeal, and were acquitted. Another apocryphal gospel, named that of the Nativity, says moreover that Joseph and Mary, having taken the water of ordeal and walked seven times about the altar of the Lord, were so manifestly spotless that all the people confessed their innocence and the



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK
The Virgin's Ordeal by Water



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK
St. Joseph's Ordeal by Water

sanctity of Mary. On the episcopal chair at Ravenna (sixth century) is to be seen the representation of the ordeal by water; the Greek Menology of the Vatican (tenth century) shows St. Joseph visited in sleep by the Angel; and the Homilies of James the Monk contain abundance of details of the story. In the mosaics of St. Mark's, Venice, the artist introduces young men who are in the act of deriding St. Joseph. In the altar-piece at Salerno, Joseph is seated, full of thought, before the Virgin, who seems to plead her innocence; in another division of the picture he sleeps, and an angel visits his dream. This is a late form of the



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK

Arrest of Mary and Joseph

incident in art. The gentleness of the young art of the West did not admit the Byzantine incident. In the twelfth century it is treated, with some obscurity, in the altar-piece of the cathedral of Città di Castello, and it soon disappears: the fresh ideality of faith, the refinement of heart that had come of the mixture of races, would not endure the mere approach of a gross thought, or the mere suggestion of suspicion. The Byzantine tale fell to silence upon Italian soil. Giotto does not notice it in his series in the Scrovegni chapel at Padua, and passes from the Visitation straight to the Nativity.



GENTILE DA FABRIANO

[Florence]

THE NATIVITY



GUIDO DA COMO

[Pistoia]

IN the acrosolium of one of the dark galleries of the Catacomb close to the basilica of St. Sebastian, on the Appian Way, is a painting of a wooden bench upon which lies the Divine Child, swaddled, with two animals at His side. From this design of a rude draughtsman in the fourth century of the Christian era to the "Notte" of Correggio, how

long was the road traversed by art, how long was its labour, and how many were its pains!

To follow step by step the long variation of type and treatment from the dark beginnings of art underground to its lowering in the full light and open air of civilisation, is to trace the whole history of the ideals of mankind in the world that succeeded the world of Antiquity. The modern historian of art, intent upon the examination and definition of the style of this or that work or school, very rarely takes note of the changes or the additions that divide it from the past, albeit from that past it is derived. Yet art has grown after the manner of the coral that rises upon the surface of the water, and lifts itself in the form of a



IVORY

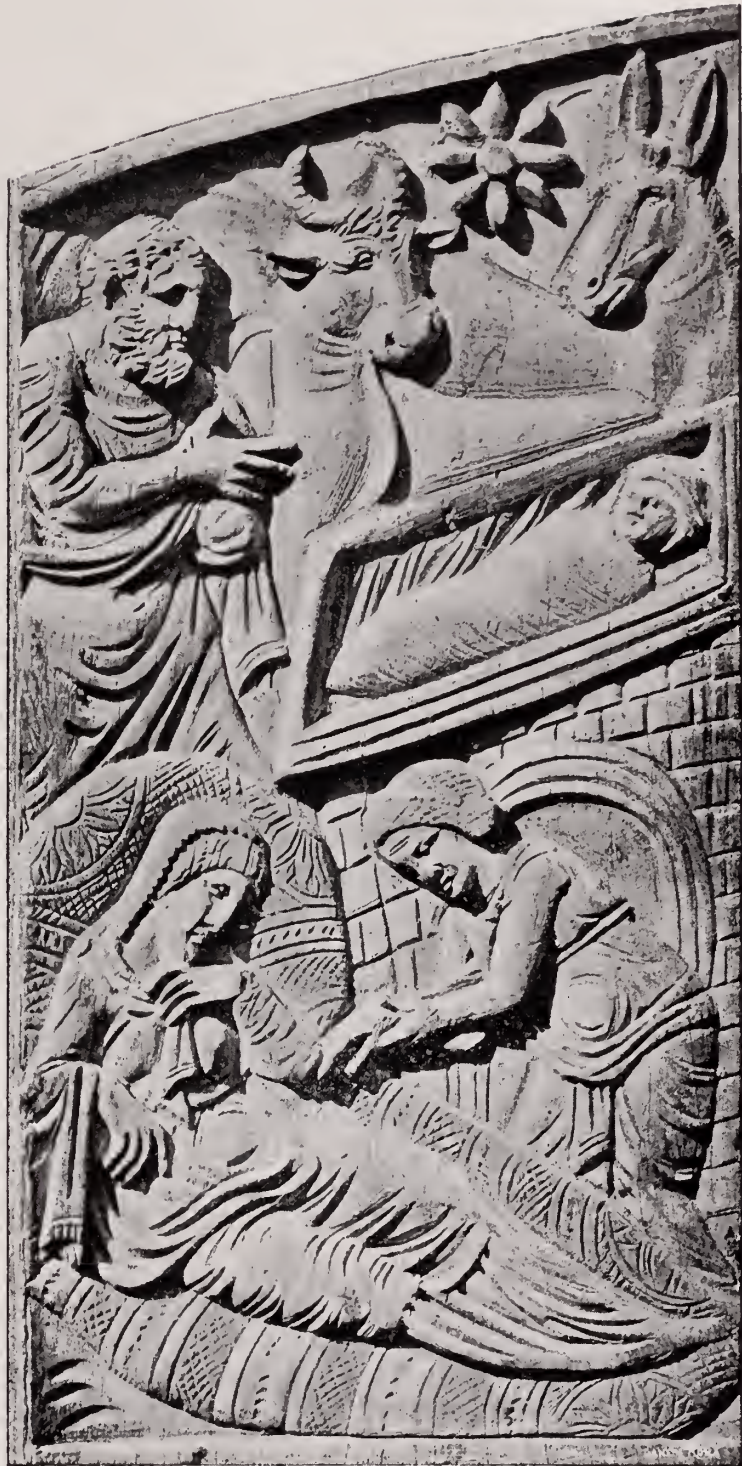
[Ravenna

rock, as atom by atom the buds of the polypi grow upon the remains of older generations. Novelty in art is never more than a modification of the past. Thus at least did they think in that past, when novelty was considered very quietly and coolly, and when artists worked together in concert for the triumph of national painting, linking hands not only with one another but with all the traditions of their fathers. In order to understand the bonds of those traditions it is necessary to follow the course of design, but not according to the methods of iconography which neglects the artistic evolution of art in order to study too exclusively the signification or

imagery of painting. This science at times causes the figures of art to speak things that they would repudiate if they could, even as the science of the commentators on the poets has led them to explain all the commas and to overlook the art. The opening or shutting of a hand, the raising or lowering of an arm, the bending or straightening of a leg, have been held to be matters of importance, but the movement

and impulse of the whole composition have been less regarded, and the initial search for beauty has been hardly recorded. Students have kept their eyes fixed upon arbitrary periods of time, whereas the study of iconography cannot be of real service to the study of art unless it take wide views, aware at once of the cell or primitive form and of the most complete work; of the genesis of a subject, of its development, and of its entire fulfilment. These thoughts arise upon the reading, for example, of the essay of Dr. Max Schmidt upon the *Nativity of Christ*, or of the *Sainte Vierge* of M. Rohault de Fleury; and this so much the more as the writers in question and others stop short of the full time of artistic deve-

lopment that followed long after the ending of the Middle Ages. They have in fact made a study rather of religion in art than of art proper.



IVORY

[Ravenna

And yet their labours are of more value and serve a better purpose than do those of ordinary critics, who take no notice of anything in a



IVORY

[Milan Cathedral]

painting except its subject, and fly-like Icarus across space, with wings fastened to their shoulders by means of the softest wax. The first named have at any rate august limitations to their studies, whereas the second group have none.

The first illustrations of the Nativity have their origin, needless to say, in the Gospels according to St. Luke and St. Matthew. In the one we read of Jesus born in Bethlehem of Judæa, in the reign of Herod, and the narrative goes forward to the incident of the Wise Men who, having seen His star in the East, came to offer Him their tribute; in the other is vouchsafed the history of the birth of Christ, of Mary's wrapping Him in swaddling clothes



IVORY

[The Louvre]

and laying Him in a manger, of the watch kept by shepherds with their sheep, of the splendour and the song of the heavenly host proclaiming the tidings of man's salvation and the praises of God. The Gospel of St. Luke tells not of the Wise Men; but soon the two sacred texts were mingled in the minds of men. Christians began in the fourth century, and hardly before, to record these events and mysteries in the marbles of their graves and the frescoes of the Catacombs. The primitive Christians avoided the presentation by visible images of the Persons of the Gospel history; especially did they eschew portraying the figure of the



FRAGMENT

[San Lorenzo nel Piceno



FRESCO

[Sant' Urbano alla Caffarella



ROMANESQUE BAS-RELIEF

[Piacenza

Redeemer in His sufferings, whether in the lowly manger or on the cross of Calvary. Their art, simple, abstract, and dedicated to the ideal,

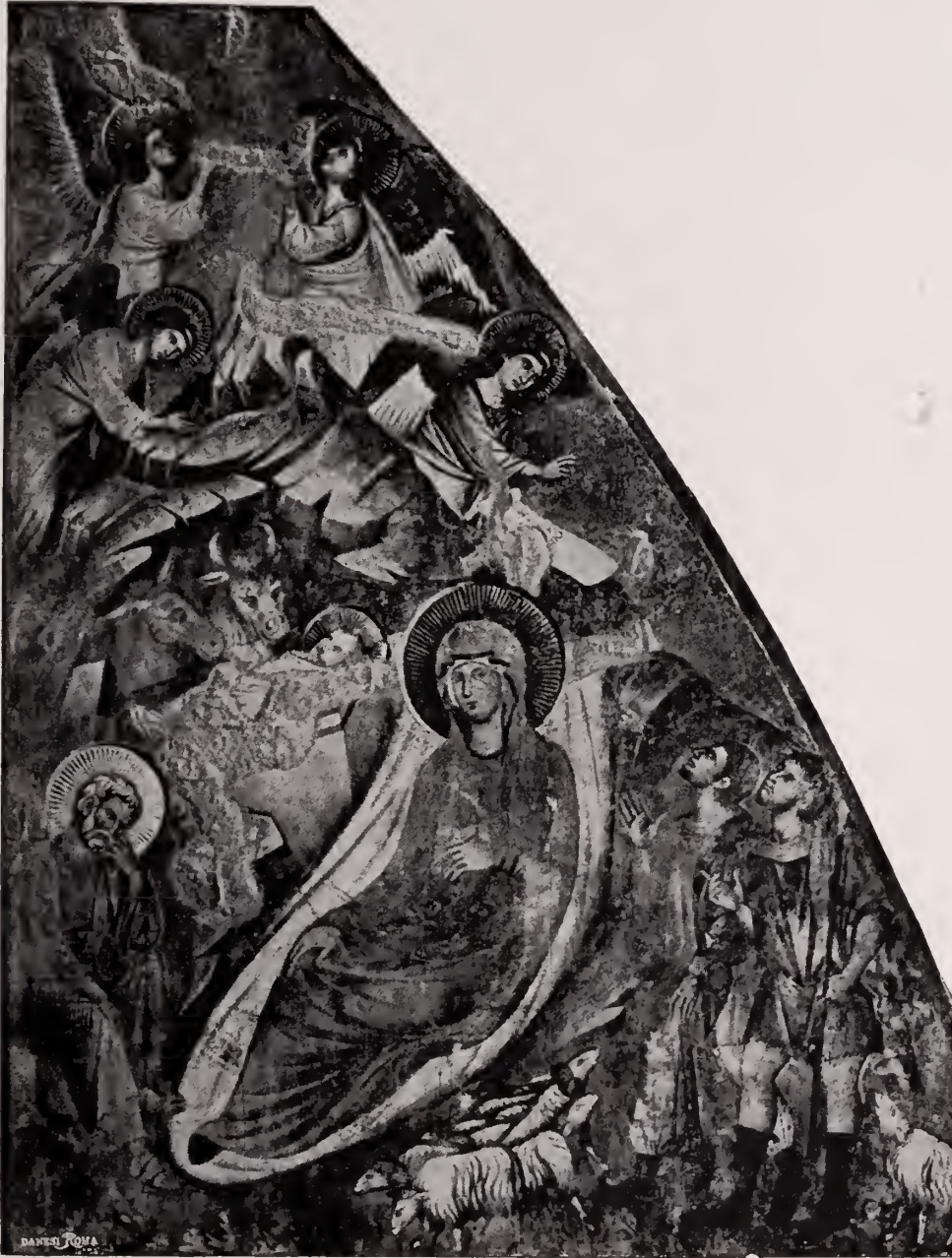


TWELFTH-CENTURY MOSAIC

[Palermo]

being derived from the symbolism of the Semitic race, did not seek in any way for beauty or the delight of the eyes; it was in search of

imagery and allegory, removed from life and reality, speaking to the soul and representing its remote and significant visions. In figuring the scene of the Nativity the early Christians combined the Gospel with Old Testament prophecy. They kept in mind the visions of Isaiah and his promise of the Child who should be the Prince of Peace amid a people walking in darkness and in the shadow of death; and they remembered the word of the prophet who announced to heaven and



SCHOOL OF CIMABUE

[Assisi



IVORY (RHENISH ART)

[Cologne

earth the wrath of God thundering over Jerusalem. The reproachful mention of the ox and the ass that knew their master's crib while Israel did not consider, they referred, strangely enough, to the real ox and the real ass that stood at the crib of the Nativity; or at any rate they gave a second meaning to the prophet's words—a meaning material but mystic. An ox and an ass are always present at the manger, therefore — and with no lack of propriety or probability. Every form being a symbol, a conventional sign, an ideographic example, the Fathers of the Church take the ox

and the ass as figures of humanity, Jew and Gentile. St. Ambrose himself recognises in the ass the symbol of the Gentile; and St. Gregory of Nyassa sees in the ox the Jew bound in the harness of the Law, and in the ass the heathen loaded with the burden of idolatry. But such ecclesiastical symbolism was not, and could not be, proper to art; and thus, when the partly satirical allusion to classes of humanity had lapsed by degrees and been forgotten, these animals kept their place in the naturalistic representation of the scene of the Nativity. At first symbols and the realities had not been separated. In order, for instance, that the symbol should not be overlooked, a figure of the Prophet Isaiah was introduced opposite to that of the Virgin, in the act of pointing to the mystical star. But as, little by little, the symbolism was abandoned or taken for granted, the material form had a permanent place in art. In the apocryphal gospel of the pseudo St. Matthew, towards the sixth century, compiled from Greek sources (as indeed were also the apocryphal gospel of St. Jacob and the narrative of Thomas the Israelite), we read

that the Divine Infant was actually adored in the manger by the ox and the ass. In vain was the pseudo-gospel condemned by Pope Gelasius; the legendary incidents of the Nativity had taken fast hold of the popular mind.

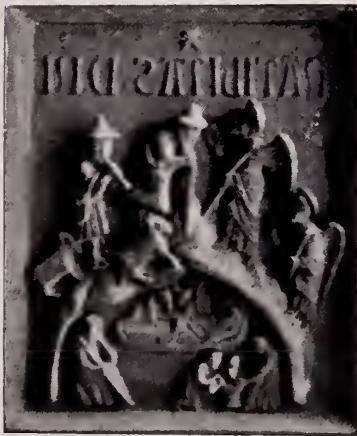
So it was with other accessories of the traditional Nativity, at the time of the triumph of the Christian Church, when Constantine had built a basilica at Bethlehem, and the celebration of

Christmas on the 25th December—a festival unknown, at any rate in the West, during the first three centuries—had been instituted. To the



IVORY

[Ravenna]



BONANNO DA PISA

[Pisa]

pure symbolism of the era of the martyrs succeeds the representation of public events, and scenes of the glorification of the Church. Art comes forth from the Catacombs, and displays itself in churches resplendent with marbles and mosaics, making a glorious manifestation of the events of the Gospel history. "A bright and shining light," says Eusebius, "a light that no cloud shall ever dim again, shall illumine Christ's churches scattered throughout the world." Thus, animated, art takes a new beauty of form.

The scene of the Nativity copies something, in the figures of the shepherds, from antiquity, long in love with the life of the fields as the poets had sung it. Christians, in the darkness of the Catacombs, had already drawn the Good Shepherd in the simple form of a humble countryman; it needed but to take the lamb from the shoulder in order to place this figure, with others like it, close to the flock or the manger. And the group wears the tunic and bears the crook, as do the sylvans and the fauns of the painters of Pompeii; they appear, like rustic gods,



THE GROPPOLI PULPIT (1194)

between the branches, but the shepherds are good, pure, and simple creatures. The Virgin is invested, especially in sculpture, as we have already seen, with the aspect of a later Juno. According to the wild imagination of a Gnostic heretic, Mary was Juno, and the Gospels but a form of Pagan story. This is the drift, apparently, of the essay attributed to Sextus Julius Africanus, a work of the third century, in which the New Testament is as it were translated into the language of Paganism. The Fathers of the Church themselves, though not thus fantastic, used a style which repeated that of Plato and Seneca, when they sang the maternity of Mary and the glory of her Divine Son. Ambrose celebrates the radiant manger and the night resplendent with a new star; Victorinus the smile of the earth, the rejoicing of the sea, of the winds, and of the clouds, at the springing of the holy seed. And the Christian sculptors, like the sacred poets and the patristic writers, copied the manner of the Pagans when they affirmed, with the blows of their chisels, the conquests of the new religion, and collected the types, the images, the conventions, the tools of the older world—things fallen from the hands of the vanished artist.

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DANESI ROMA



DANESI ROMA

CAPITAL

[Reggio-Emilia]

The winged Victories leave their triumphal arches of the wars of kings to take the name of Angels and become the messengers of peace to shepherds, the folds of their vesture straightened and their action grown grave even in its joyousness; Mary, seated like a statue symbolical of chastity, ponders by the manger-side; the Wise Men, wearing the raiment familiar to our eyes in the works of antiquity, carry the cornu-



PULPIT

[Province of Lucca]

copia heaped with fruit, rather than that gold and that incense which were mystically proper as offerings to a King and to God, and instead of that myrrh in which Origen sees the prophecy of death and burial.

Besides these symbols, old or new, there are other signs accompanying the early groups of the Nativity. Instead of the star, the Wise Men's guide, we often find a monogram inscribed within a circle, signifying that the true star is Christ, the guide of all mankind through the ways of darkness. The Wise Men, according to the Fathers, are to be taken as symbols of all Gentiles illumined by the true light, and Mary herself



MOSAIC

[Vatican Museum



MOSAIC

[Santa Maria in Trastevere

represents the Incarnation of Christ. The reproduction of Greek forms in Western art is notable in the setting of the scene of the Saviour's



NICCOLA PISANO

[Pulpit, Baptistery at Pisa]

birth; for the Roman sculptors represent it as a shed or open outhouse, classically supported upon piles, whereas the local tradition is that the Nativity took place in a cave, and it is a cave that pilgrims visit at Bethlehem. Sometimes this grot appears instead of the primitive building. It is certain that caves were in Palestine a refuge for flocks and herds, and might well be fitted with mangers for their food.

While the apocryphal gospels, so often mentioned, were growing more popular and more traditional in Europe, the rendering of the Nativity in art could not but become, by its influence, more and more realistic and less mystical. This did, in fact, come to pass about the sixth century. The pseudo-Matthew, who was the author of one of these writings, has an abundance of detail. He tells of Zelomi and Salome, handmaids of the Virgin, as present with St. Joseph at the Nativity. The crowd in all times has been little able to follow the teachers of mysticism in any art; it needs above all to have a visible body for its imaginings, and to picture what art has to show, after the manner of things

that take place at home. Art, following the counsel of the judicious, had determined, as early as the day of Constantine, the general composition



NICCOLA PISANO AND HIS FOLLOWERS

[Pulpit at Siena

of the scene of the Nativity; nevertheless, to please rude patrons and popular expectation, these dispositions were from time to time altered or



FRA GUGLIELMO DA PISA

[San Giovanni, Pistoia

modified, and not seldom with an intrusion of grossness and materialism. From the sixth century the Nativity becomes a realistic incident. Mary lies upon a mattress; Zelomi and Salome attend her and wash the Child. Salome has her arm withered because she had doubted of the Virginity of the Mother of God, who, by her intercession, makes it whole. In one of the ivories of the chair of Maximian at Ravenna, we see the Divine Child asleep in the manger, gazed upon by two courtly beasts of



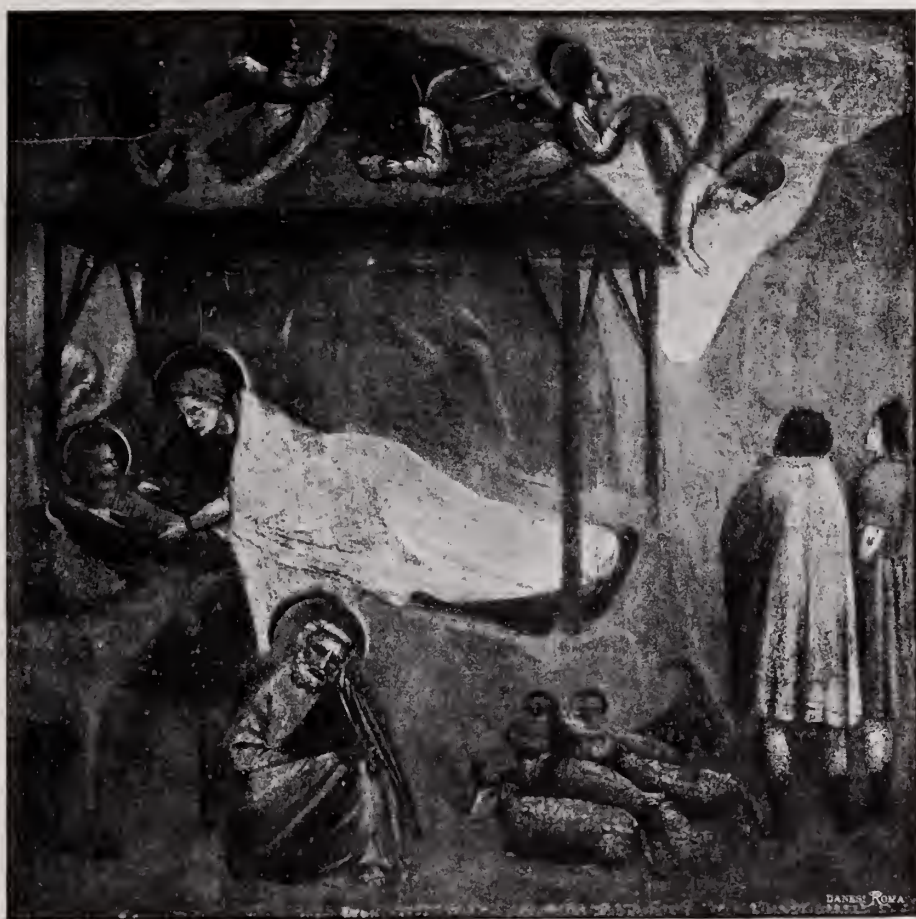
GIOVANNI PISANO

[Sant' Andrea, Pistoia]

burden, and guarded by St. Joseph, an old man of herculean form, whilst the Virgin reclines upon a Byzantine bed, pensively listening to Salome, who shows her drooping hand. This legend of Salome, taken from the apocryphal gospel of St. James, is found in the mosaics of the chapel of John VII. in St. Peter's, and in the ivories of the Municipal Museum of Bologna. Then for some centuries did art repeat the representation with little change, as though in fear lest faith should not be kept, lest something of the sacred tradition should be neglected. Much the same treatment is to be found in the Greek MS. of the eighth century at Venice, in the Greek Menology of the Library of Berlin (tenth century), in that



BAS-RELIEF AT ORVIETO



GIOTTO

[Church of the Arena, Padua

of the Vatican, in the Byzantine psalter belonging to Dr. Comarmont of Lyons (tenth to eleventh centuries) in a mosaic of the Baptistry of



GIOTTO AND HIS FOLLOWERS

[Assisi]

Florence. In each case the star shines over a manger warmed by the animals, the Virgin sits or lies in an attitude of thought, St. Joseph meditates or sleeps, the shepherds are led in by the Angel, Salome and Zelomi wash the new-born Child in a vessel. We can almost trace the disappearance of the incident of the chastisement and pardon of Salome; we are made aware of it only in the moment of her restoration, and in the act of presenting her hand for healing. For the rest, the story of the apocryphal gospel remains; we seem to see all motion suspended in that sacred scene, and the very air quiescent, as it was written in those spurious scriptures where they describe Bethlehem and its neighbourhood in the hour when Christ was born. "The lambs stood still in the way; the shepherd lifted up his staff to drive them forward, but his hand was staid; and at the waters of the brook the goats would not drink, but staid,

and their mouths were open." A mosaic that adorned the crypt of the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and dated from the twelfth century,



ORCAGNA

[Tabernacle, Or' San Michele, Florence

being the work of Ephraim and ordered by Emanuel Comnenus Porphyrogenitus, was described in 1185 by Phocas, the Cretan monk, a pilgrim to Palestine; and the description, which is the careful one of an eye-witness, tallies entirely with that given by Coricius Gazeus, in

the sixth century, of another composition which he too had seen with his own eyes. We may believe that Christian representation and imagery made, throughout the Middle Ages, and until the thirteenth century, a continuous caravan journey across the desert into the West.

It was Niccola Pisano who brought the Nativity into the region of positive plastic beauty; and this he did not so much in the pulpit of Pisa, grandiose and classic, where the Virgin looks the Roman matron, or the diademed empress throned on a triclinium, as in the pulpit of Siena, where the art is spontaneous and the sentiment living. Here Juno, Hercules, the Victories are, once for all, turned Christians; the angels are not the satellites of a divinity, but praying spirits; the shepherds, touched by the light of their star, show all their joy; the handmaids



JACOPO AVANZI

[Oratory of San Giorgio, Padua]

take reverent and devout care of the Child; and the Virgin raises no high and dominant head, but droops in gentle meditation, sweetly and

maternally, with joined hands. A follower of Niccola Pisano, Fra Guglielmo, who repeats the forms of his master's work—those, that is,



OTTAVIANO NELLI

[Trinci Palace, Foligno]

of the Pisan pulpit—has yet power to animate, even to enthusiasm, the majestic figures that serve him as models; and in his pulpit in San Giovanni *fuori civitas*, at Pistoia, he has filled the Virgin, the Child, the Wise Men with the breath and fervour of life. And Giovanni Pisano, also at Pistoia, although he keeps devoutly to the models of his father's work, causes his Virgin delicately to lift the cloth that partly covers the small head of the new-born—an action many times afterwards repeated in art, from the time of the finest of the bas-reliefs on the façade of the cathedral at Orvieto, to that of the Madonna del Velo of Raphael. The sentiment of maternity is better expressed by Giotto at Assisi than at Padua; his Virgin in the Umbrian city looks tenderly upon her Son in His swaddling-clothes, whilst the ox and the ass turn their eyes also upon the Lord, and the angels descend, their hands joined or pressed to their bosoms, full of joy; some enter in under the roof of the shed, others are above, with hands and eyes turned towards the light which cleaves the air, and strikes upon the sacred manger. The shepherds

with their flocks stay their steps, astonished at the saying of the Angel; St. Joseph meditates; one of the handmaids plays with the face of the Babe, and the other makes ready the swaddling-clothes. In this composition the scene of the Nativity passes in the ideal region, as a prelude to the Christian history, at once simple and solemn. But for the sake of variety, and as a means of closer access, the heart and mind of man were intent upon adding to it some remembrance, some affection, some hope of their own. Cavallini, designing a Nativity in the mosaics of Santa Maria in Trastevere in 1291, introduces the *taberna meritoria*—that is, a little house placed upon the skirts of the hill whence springs a fount of oil; and this is to commemorate the legendary



PIER DELLA FRANCESCA

[National Gallery, London]

miracle which was the origin of this basilica, and marked the place where the Christians afterwards took shelter under the persecution of Alexander Severus. This will show us the tendency to connect in art with the scene of the Nativity the special and local records of the church or sanctuary that is to be decorated. By this means the purely illustrative treatment changes by degrees to that very different conception known to us by the name of *sacra conversazione*. Free at last



LORENZO DA VITERBO

[Santa Maria della Verità, Viterbo]

of all realistic details, despoiled of the ox and the ass, of the shepherds and the crib, the scene is represented in the open country, or amongst magnificent buildings, or under a triumphal arch; and the donors of the work with their patron saints form the court of the Infant Son of God.

In painting and in sculpture alike, the beginning of the fourteenth century shows us an artistic representation of the closest affections of the human heart; the mother admires her baby, presses it to her breast, cares for it sweetly. It is thus that St. Bonaventure writes of the Virgin Mother as gently embracing her Child, as carrying Him in her bosom, and as contemplating Him, her face bent over the



BENOZZO GOZZOLI

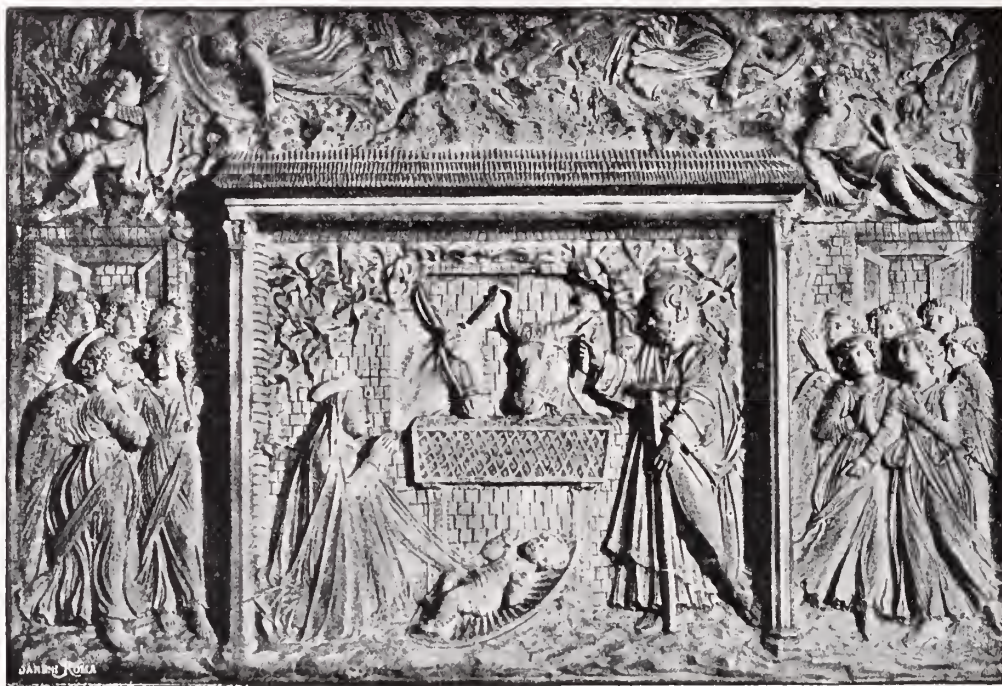
[Riccardi Palace, Florence



BENOZZO GOZZOLI

[Riccardi Palace, Florence

sacred manger, and her eyes fixed with all tenderness upon the dearly beloved Son. In the art of the followers of Niccola Pisano we often see the head of the Madonna so bent that it rests upon the little head of the new-born. And the two women at last disappear altogether from the scene where the authentic Gospels had not placed them. But



MINO DA FIESOLE

[Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome]

this new life, this movement and freshness of feeling, seemed to be delayed and hampered during the career of Gothic art in Italy. The Gothic spirit tended to make a feudal crown of Mary's diadem, and of her Son's, and to turn again to symbol that which had grown so actual in the eyes of men. Fortunately for art, and for the best Latin art of the new period, the Gothic spirit had no long abiding-place amongst men on the south of the Alps. In the development of the drama of the Nativity in art, "the ingenuous souls of the designers," says d'Ancona, "seem to feel a kind of infantine tenderness for the Divine Child. And Italian speech was turned to harmony, despite the roughness of verse and the rudeness of rhyme, and used every charming diminutive, every graceful phrase, in His honour, as a hedge of thorns brings forth red and fragrant roses."

In the fifteenth century the Virgin appears no longer seated or laid down in weakness or languor upon the ass's saddle-bags; she rises to fall on her knees before her Son, she adores Him, and as in the ancient "Dramatic Pastoral," published by the Abbé Carnel, she seems to say to Him: "Be welcome to this vale of tears, Thou flower of



VENETIAN SCULPTURE

Jesse, Thou graft from the gardens of Paradise. O King! welcome to this stable. Kneeling, I, Thy mother, adore Thee. I see Thy little cheeks redden more brightly than any rose; let me taste their honey and milk!" In this attitude does Angelico figure her on her knees, while the angels sing "Gloria in Excelsis," the song of Heaven itself. St. Joseph, moreover, ceases to be 'the little old man seated asleep after his journey, or a man "full of sadness," as St. Bona-

venture describes him, "because he was not able to make ready what was fitting"; with folded hands he also worships. It seemed most natural to Angelico that before the face of the Child all should fall to their knees. The light which shines not only from the head, but from the whole body of the Child, is also a characteristic of the art of this period. Jacopo Avanzi of old had placed St. Joseph's hand before his



ANTONIO ROSSELLINO

[Monteoliveto, Naples]

eyes, to express the brightness of the light shed from the sacred manger; but Angelico takes better means to indicate Him who was the Source of light, and seems to wish to illustrate the strophe of St. Fortunatus, who sang the birth of Jesus as the birth of light. And this idea remains; it grows more definite and is treated with more skill, until the time when Correggio, in his famous "Notte," lights his scene solely by the rays that shine from the figure of the Child.

In the little picture in the Florence Accademia, Angelico shows us all his religious spirit in the devotion that constrains alike Mary and Joseph, the shepherds drawing near in their timidity like meek



PERUGINO

[Vannucci Gallery, Perugia]

little friars, and the angels gathered in the clouds and encircling the group, as they might surround a monstrance. In this work, and generally in Tuscan art, the conception of the scene is simple, and cleared of the mediæval realism—of rustics, of oxen and asses, of stalls, mattresses, saddle-bags, and of Zelomi and Salome; or at least the rustic shepherds are at a distance, the ox and the ass no longer have the office of keeping the Child warm with their breath, the crib



CARLO CRIVELLI

[University Museum, Strasburg]

is placed in the background, as something done with. Pier della Francesca, who preserves the traditional accessories in his picture in the London National Gallery, uses them in a manner all his own. He introduces the shepherds, but gives them a dramatic mission; they are in the act of explaining to St. Joseph the cause of their coming, and he is seated on a saddle with his hands crossed over his knee. The new-comers point upwards to the star, and even the ass looks up; the Virgin, attired like a lady of the fifteenth century, kneels to worship her Child, who holds out both His arms to her; meanwhile five angels stand like so many minstrels, two to sing and three to pluck the strings of the lute and viol. The angels taking part in the Nativity are led under the roof of the outhouse and introduced into the presence of God

by that fifteenth-century Tuscan art which created for them shapes sublime and beautiful. Take, for example, Benozzo Gozzoli, who, in the Riccardi Palace at Florence, painted a fantastic garden with flowering



PERUGINO

[Villa Albani, Rome]

shrubs and hedges of roses between straight stems of cypresses and palms. From on high angels fan the clouds apart; on earth they walk the garden, to right and left—celestial cohorts, with the gemmed wings of the peacock, singing in chorus. Two other companies, prone or with bent knee, humbly adore the Child, and hither and thither flit young

creatures, winged, and clad in white, who heap flowers into the folds of their garments, and gather them from the garden bowers. This is the dream of the Nativity of Florentine art in the Renaissance. Between these two frescoes, conceptions of Paradise, there stood formerly a picture of Filippino Lippi's, now at Berlin, and resembling two more in the Accademia di Belle Arti at Florence; each of these Nativities shows the Virgin worshipping her Child, her face expressing



GIOVANNI SPAGNA

[Vatican Gallery]



SCHOOL OF PERUGINO

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

sweetness and devotion; and each is exceedingly simple in composition, free from the mediæval scenic apparatus, having only the addition of some little figures of unobtrusive anchorites lurking amongst the rocks of the background. The tendency of these later painters is to reduce



LORENZO DI CREDI

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

the groups to the figures of the Virgin and Child—a beautiful maid adoring a Babe who wears the graces of His tender age and is Himself coloured with the tints of lilies and roses. Such is the simple group of Andrea della Robbia, and of Francesco Francia in the *Madonna del Roseto*. And this reduction to few figures and to slight materials brought “Holy Families” more into vogue than Nativities. When, at the close of the fifteenth century, the breath of a new mysticism, and



BOTTICELLI

[National Gallery, London

the spirit of Savonarola, passes across the field of art, it is only in the Nativity, properly so called, that angels are introduced as offering



SCHOOL OF FILIPPINO LIPPI

[Pitti Palace

homage to the Messiah. Lorenzo di Credi breathes the ardour of faith into his ecstatic angels; Mariotto Albertinelli's angel holds out to the Child a cross crowned with thorns; a follower of Filippino Lippi fills the hands of his angels with the petals of roses, which they throw over the Divine Child, an action repeated by Raphael. And Botticelli, even after his adhesion to Savonarola and to the company of the Piagnoni, did not quite forget his Florentine images of youth and joy; in the luminous sky over his Nativity in the London National Gallery he places twelve angels, resembling the twelve Houris of Antiquity,

who sing carols, and carry branches of the peaceful olive in each hand, dropping the greenery upon the thatch, the earth, and the heads of the shepherds, whom the angels, overjoyed, clasp in the embrace of mortal and immortal. Mindful of the Apocalypse, the Piagnone painter introduced also certain little spirits of evil peering from the rocks. These appeared also in a "Mystery" play of 1507; here, whilst the angels hymned the new-born Saviour, and the Virgin Mother knelt to Him,



BENVENUTI (KNOWN AS ORTOLANO)

[Private American Collection]

pagan idols fell from their pedestals, and Hell sent forth her spite in the shape of angry demons. These mystical allusions, however, had no long continuance, but there remained that symbol, approved in the Renaissance, of the old pagan world fallen into ruin—the fragments of arch and palace hard by the humble shelter of the Redeemer in His Nativity. In conclusion, Tuscan art, in dealing with this motive, has every freshness of inspiration and all variety of fancy, and so it was with other arts as with the art of painting. Machiavelli tells us that in 1466 the Nativity was represented in a Mystery "of so great pomp, and so magnificent, that in the preparing and the playing thereof the whole city of Florence spent several months." In Umbria, on the

other hand, the Nativity had not altogether such good fortune in art ; it tended to take a form rather monotonous, rather symmetrical, than liberal and living. The Child is laid upon cloths, the Madonna, St. Joseph, the shepherds, and the angels worshipping at several distances



MARIOTTO ALBERTINELLI

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

—the Virgin and her spouse in the foreground, the shepherds in the middle plane, the angels above, unless they take the second place instead of the shepherds. It is done by a kind of routine. Thus does Perugino compose, and his school after him. It was to the older Umbrians that belonged the brighter animation, the more dramatic action which is in the work of Ottaviano Nelli, for example, at the Trinci Palace, Foligno. Here the Madonna on her knees stretches



FILIPPO LIPPI

ROYAL MUSEUM, BERLIN

her arms to the radiant Child, with suddenness, almost with agitation of gesture. How different this, too, however, in the ungraceful line of the figures, in the stiff composition, from the gay action of Tuscany!



LUDOVICO MAZZOLINO

[Athenæum, Ferrara]

Probably some devout and tenacious conservatism caused Umbria to hold somewhat aloof from the renewals to which Tuscany gave herself with so much grace and alacrity. See, for instance, how, a painter of Perugino's school in his "Good Shepherd" at the Uffizi copies his

symbol of the Saviour from the work of the Christians in the first ages, before the image of the Crucifix had come into use. Christ as



CORREGGIO

[Crespi Gallery, Milan]

the Good Shepherd may be traced in the Byzantine art of Venice (in one of the archivolts of St. Mark's), and this Peruginesque painter preserves it in the day of Raphael.

In northern Italy, and especially in Ferrara in the beginning of the sixteenth century, the composition of the Nativity grew by degrees more elaborate, rather than more simple. Secondary elements of the scene are omitted by Ortolano, but the chiaroscuro is studied and brilliant in the "Nativity" of Mazzolino, and a delicate and careful grace adorns the little figures of the "Ercole Grandi"; both these works are at Ferrara. And at last we come to him who is the master of the graces. He enters into the labours of all the ages. In his ear he carries the sound of the songs and litanies of the Fathers of the Church, the murmurs of old hymns, the echoes of the choirs of ancient sanctuaries; in his eye he carries the visions of prophets. He confronts

the symbol and the reality, the early ideal and the natural fact. He creates a Nativity—that in Signor Crespi's possession at Milan—in



CORREGGIO

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

which the Madonna, on her knees, covers her right hand with her mantle, in sign of the cold of the winter night; the moon, taking light beyond an ancient ruin, casts her silver light upon the clouds of the deep blue sky; and the trees, caught by the wandering winds, with



CORREGGIO

[Dresden Gallery]

their tossing branches increase the impression of cold. An angel, suspended upon his hovering wings, points the shepherds to where the Child lies upon a white cloth asleep, and St. Elizabeth shows Him to the little St. John, who with a childlike curiosity leans over to look. To this first form of the Nativity, as Correggio composed it, succeeded a second of perfect simplicity, in which the delighted Virgin adores the Child, and wins Him to an exchange of kisses and caresses. And after this famous Uffizi picture comes the Dresden "Notte," the marvellous work in which the powers of Correggio have their ripest and amplest development. The light shed from the figure of Correggio's Holy Child shines upon all the group, bathes the face of the gentle Mother, dazzles the shepherds, and involves the angels in glory. Here we find what may be called the synthesis of the representations of the Nativity. Like Leonardo with his "Last Supper," and Titian with his "Presentation of the Virgin" and "Assumption," Correggio with the "Notte" set up a goal, a term to one of the long roads travelled by Italian art; he crowned the work that had been begun in the Catacombs, had been continued in the basilicas of a conquering religion and in the cathedrals of the cities of the peninsula, and had been filled with life by a nation's affection and faith.



[Church of San Vitale, Ravenna]

THE ADORATION OF THE WISE MEN

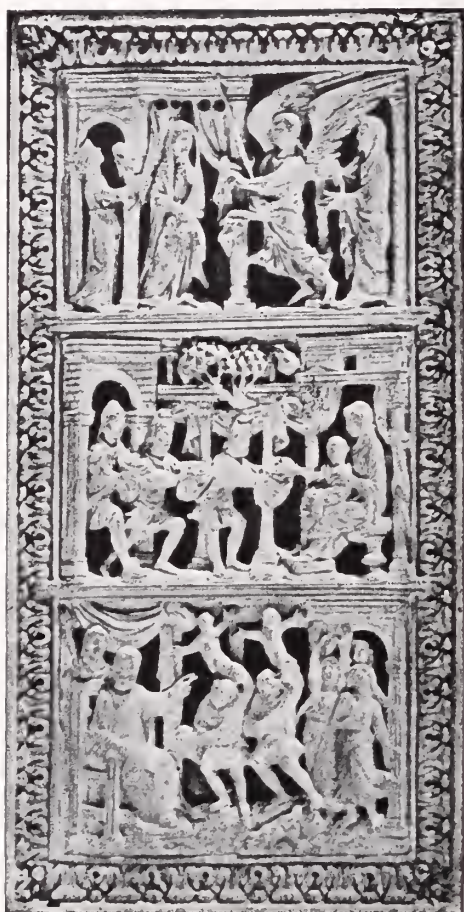


IVORY

[Pesaro]

"ON the banks of the Persian Gulf, where the sun is born" (thus sings in his *Cathemericon* the poet Prudentius), "the Wise Men, learned in interpretation, became aware of the royal sign. When it began to shine the other stars grew dark, nor did Lucifer himself venture to show his beautiful form in this presence. But who is this, they asked, who is

the King so powerful that nature trembles before him, and the lights and the skies serve him? . . . He is the King of the Gentiles and the King of the Hebrews, who was promised to Father Abraham and to his seed. Now does the flower of David bud from the root of Jesse. Full of strength, He shakes His sceptre, and from on high rules this world. Full of these thoughts, with their eyes raised to the star on high, the Wise Men follow the shining path of that star which leads them whither they should go. And behold it stands over the head of the Divine Child and reveals Him by its ray. And the Wise Men, having beheld Him, unfold the treasures they have brought from the East, and worship Him, offering myrrh, frankincense, and regal gold."



IVORY

[Milan Cathedral]

Thus, in the fourth century, had Prudentius taken his inspiration from the Gospel of St. Matthew, where the painters of the Christian tombs had likewise sought authority for their work. In the Catacomb of SS. Marcellinus and Peter on the Via Labicana, and in that of Callixtus and Domitilla, the representation of the Epiphany was defined. The Virgin, seated in a chair, with her vesture bordered with purple, holds the Child in her lap, whilst the Wise Men advance, presenting their gifts to Him who was the expectation of the Gentiles. The Virgin is not apart from the group, as she is at times in the Nativity; she takes an essential place in it, with maternal dignity. The Magi, clad in the short tunic, in the drawers of chess-board design called *sarabella* by the Persians, and in the Phrygian cap or Persian fez commonly found amongst these representations,

bring their gifts eagerly. From figures and images from Asia and Africa, and from other provinces sending tribute to Imperial Rome, the Christian designers obtained their type of the three Wise Kings, as may be traced in the Barberini ivory and elsewhere. Until the end



IVORY

[Trivulzio Collection, Milan]



ROMANESQUE BAS-RELIEF

[Fano]



IVORY

[Barberini Collection, Rome]



IVORY BOOK-COVER

[Milan Cathedral
2 L.]

of the sixth century the Adoration of the Child by the Wise Men retains much the same composition (with the exception of the group in



ROMANESQUE FRIEZE

[Pistoia]

the triumphal arch in Santa Maria Maggiore); and everywhere—at Salonica, at the Lateran, at Ravenna, in sarcophagus bas-reliefs and in mosaics alike—the Virgin has the same aspect, that of a noble matron



THIRTEENTH-CENTURY PULPIT

[Barga]



ROMANESQUE BAS-RELIEF

[Arezzo

seated in a chair of state. With the process of time her figure does but show an increase of majesty; it is stiff in the imperial mantle.



ELEVENTH-CENTURY PAINTING

[Vatican Library]

The chaplet of hair worn by the Virgin of the Moscellinus and Peter Catacomb gives place to the golden nimbus, as in the mosaic of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna. Between the Kings and the august



BENEDETTO ANTELAMI

[Parma]



NICCOLA PISANO

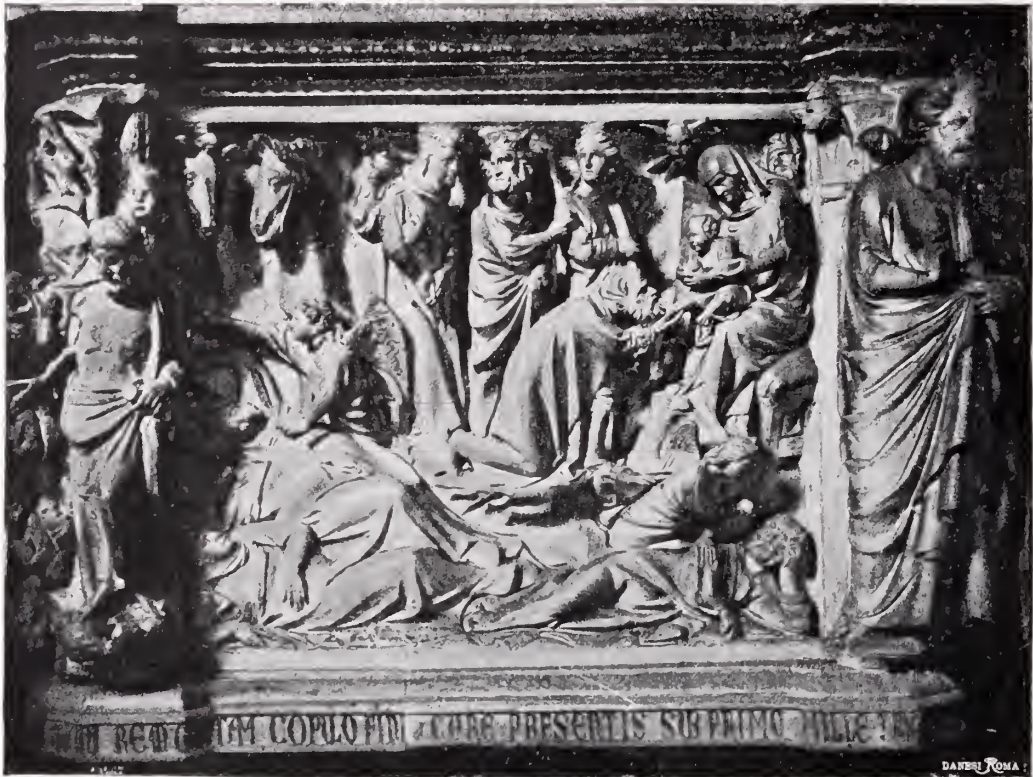
[Baptistry Pulpit, Pisa



NICCOLA PISANO AND HIS FOLLOWERS

[Cathedral Pulpit, Siena

Mother are angels. This treatment would seem to give an older date than has been supposed to the sarcophagus that contained the remains of Isaac VIII., Exarch of Ravenna, who died in 643; the composition has a simplicity that had disappeared in the middle of the seventh century. Even in the sixth century the groups had become more elaborate, as in the chair of Maximian at Ravenna, where an angel



GIOVANNI PISANO

[Pistoia]

bearing a traveller's staff appears near to the figure of the Virgin, and in the pyx in the National Museum of Florence, where the Kings present themselves, in sign of reverence, with their hands covered.

The visit of the Shepherds was at times associated with that of the three Kings in the *bassi tempi*, although in general the artist intended to represent successive events in the history of Christ, whom he represents in swaddling-clothes in presence of the Shepherds, and clothed in a tunic at the visit of the Kings. Some confusion took place now and then, owing to the tyranny of space, as in a phial at Monza, in the pyx already mentioned at Florence, in another at Werden, and

a third at Rouen. On the other hand, in Venice, under the small anterior arches of the ciborium at St. Mark's, the Gospel narrative is clearly followed. After the scene of the arrival of the Shepherds, we



ROMANESQUE BAS-RELIEF

[Forlì]

find the three Kings, the first looking upon a sphere, the second unrolling a scroll, the third pointing to the star. While Herod sits frowning upon his throne, the Kings present their gifts to the Child,



BAS-RELIEF

[Orvieto Cathedral]

and He receives them on the knees of Mary, who is covered with a mantle that also veils her head. As in the mosaics of the ark of Santa Maria Maggiore, Joseph is present at the ceremony; but in

those mosaics the Divine Child is alone on His throne to receive homage; the Mother looks on Him with joy and blesses Him. In the sixth century the composition of the scene of the Epiphany had



MOSAIC

[Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome

thus grown in dignity; the Virgin had the Byzantine air of empire, and the Child used the action of benediction, or held the cross in guise of a sceptre. The angels stood as guards about a throne that was raised upon steps and became an altar.

During the Middle Ages the representation of the Epiphany remains much as Antiquity left it to barbarous successors. At Santa Maria in Cosmedin, Rome, in the Greek Menology of the Emperor Basil, we find the Child *sedentem in sinu Mariæ*, according to the apocryphal writer's description of the entry of the Wise Men into the house over which hung the miraculous star. But the Greeks by degrees went far in the evolution of the details of the scene. In the

canon of the *Guide to Painting* published by Didron the form was precisely prescribed: "House; the Virgin seated bears the Child who is in the act of benediction; the three Magi offer their gifts in golden caskets. The one is old, has a long beard, an uncovered head, kneels with his eyes fixed upon Christ, and offers his gift with one hand, whilst in the other he holds his own crown. The second has little beard; the third has none, and is of Negro race. The two look upon one another, showing each other the Child Jesus Christ. Behind the Virgin stands St. Joseph in the act of admiration and surprise. Outside, a young man holds three horses by the bridle. Afar off on a mountain may be seen the Wise Men upon their horses, returning into their



GIOTTO

[Scrovegni Chapel, Padua]

a young man holds three horses by the bridle. Afar off on a mountain may be seen the Wise Men upon their horses, returning into their

own country, accompanied by an angel." This formal elaboration began in the East, but the West, following its lead, turned the scene into one of a courtly visit of homage and reception in state; a contrast is made between the simplicity of the rustic Nativity and the festival and



ORCAGNA

[Or' San Michele, Florence]

pomp of the Epiphany. At the beginning of the eleventh century the Oriental mitres seen at times upon the heads of the Magi give place entirely to the crown; and the Virgin, no longer wrapped in her mantle, but in royal vesture and liliated diadem, gives audience to her honourable guests. Thus is the scene rendered in the beginning of the twelfth century at Fano, and during the same century at Arezzo in the Pieve church; the Magi are accompanied by a flying angel.



TADDEO GADDI

[Assisi]



LORENZO MONACO

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

Nevertheless, the general group remains unchangeable, and it is but the details that change and change again. In the bas-relief of the architrave of the gateway of Sant' Andrea at Pistoia, a work of 1166, the Virgin is old, the Child takes with both hands the gifts of the first and most aged of the Kings, and St. Joseph stands behind the Mother's chair. In the Barga pulpit the Child blesses the King who offers his gift, and, behind, the two companion Kings seem to be very



GENTILE DA FABRIANO

[Florence

dwarfs—the smaller as they are removed from the presence of Deity. Mary, full of thought, turns an uneasy head. Perhaps the rude

sculptor, considering how her soul was wrung with anxiety for the safety of her Divine Child, sought to give the expression of anxiety to



BEATO ANGELICO

[San Marco, Florence]

her features and action. Thus does St. Ephrem in his Canticle show us how Mary trembled lest Herod should draw his sword upon this tender fruit of the vine before its hour of maturity. At the coming of the Kings she asked of them wherefore they had left their own



SCHOOL OF FILIPPO LIPPI

[Prato]

country to bring their treasure to her Child, and St. Ephrem makes them reply that they had come in order to pay homage to the King

of kings. "And how is this," she rejoins, "that a poor woman has given birth to a King? I have nought, my house is empty and poor. My Babe has no throne, no jewels, no legions; He lies in the poverty of his mother." The anxiety and misgiving of Mary is thus made



FILIPPINO LIPPI

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

manifest in the thirteenth-century work, in which the rigid rules as to the three Kings are relaxed, and the scene in general has more freedom of movement. At Forlì, in the church of San Mercuriale, in the lunette above the doorway, the Virgin looks austere upon the Kings, one of whom, on entering the House of God, removes his crown; the second has doffed his own; and the third has already



SANDRO BOTTICELLI

[Hermitage, Petersburg

hung up his crown and his mantle. In the mosaic of Santa Maria in Trastevere, on the contrary, the three Wise Men make their entry in rule, according to the ancient formula, intent upon offering their tribute to the Divine Child; the Virgin looks doubtfully upon them and their gifts; she is enwrapped within her mantle, the royal visitants have the former fashion of costume—the chlamys and fibula and



BERNARDINO LUINI

[Saronno

square-patterned stockings—and St. Joseph wears again the pallium. This return to antique ways may be seen also in the pulpit of the



DOMENICO GHIRLANDAJO

[Chapel of the Innocenti, Florence



LUCA SIGNORELLI

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence
2 N

Baptistery at Pisa (1260), the famous work of Niccola Pisano. Here Mary is covered with the mantle, yet the diadem is placed on her



FRANCESCO RAIBOLINI, "IL FRANCIA"

[Dresden]

Juno-like head; the Angel re-appears with his pilgrim's staff; and in place of the camels which stand, as a sign of Oriental journeyings, on the sarcophagus sculptures of the Lateran, here are horses taken from some representation of a triumphal chariot. Nature has the upper hand in conflict with the antique in Niccola Pisano's other pulpit—that at Siena (1266-68), where the Virgin bows her head, wondering at the homage of the Kings, and in place of the classic diadem wears a mediæval crown. One of the Kings brings to his lips a foot of the Child's to kiss it; here is no longer the prince of a Roman province bringing tribute to a Cæsar, but a believer prostrate in the dust; the other two, slightly raising the covers of the vases they carry, stand with bent heads, as though touched with shame at the sight of the King of kings, yet willing to show their gifts in sign of their devotion. This strongly expressive composition was imitated by Giovanni Pisano in the pulpit of Sant' Andrea at Pistoia, but with less than Niccola's

grandeur or spirit, and less also than his power of structure or security of proportion.

Giotto preserves the ancient austerity in his Virgin, who presents her Child to one of the Kings. Under the poor roof, which covers the



BALDASSARE PERUZZI

[Sant' Onofrio, Rome]

sacred group like a *baldacchino*, she sits like a queen; St. Joseph and an angel, with the nimbus about each head, are by her throne; the Child, covered with swaddling-clothes, has an almost regal gravity, even while one of the Kings caressingly approaches to kiss Him, and the

other two, like priests in their attire, noble and devout, await their turn to pay homage to the Divine Child. One of the camels which have borne the Kings on their journey seems to take part in the scene, with open mouth, pricked ears, and eyes fixed on the Babe. At Assisi a follower of Giotto's—Taddeo Gaddi—illustrates the same sacred inci-



LEONARDO DA VINCI

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

dent in a somewhat more ornate manner, and without attaining to the simple severity of the Paduan composition, which seems to show the scene passing within a cathedral, under wings of mystery, and in recollection of spirit. The Virgin remains everywhere seated, as in primitive times, but at Orvieto, in the bas-reliefs of the cathedral, angels hold a canopy over her; and in Orcagna's tabernacle at Or' San Michele her chair, with twisted columns at the sides, takes the shape

of an episcopal throne of the thirteenth century. All other details of the Epiphany seem to vary more quickly than those of the action and attitude of the Mother. She retains her severe dress, and is uncrowned even when the Kings, having laid aside the *saraballa*, appear in the elegant riding-dress of young Florentines of the day. But when we reach the fifteenth century we find a diminution of the expression of



CORREGGIO

[Brera Gallery, Milan]

severity, of surprise, or of fear in her face. She takes part in the festival, adoring, with the Kings, the Divine Boy on whom she bends eyes full of maternal tenderness. Whereas Lorenzo Monaco showed the Mother and Child appearing as in a vision to Joseph and to the Wise Men, Gentile Fabriano gave to the scene a grandiose social character. His Magi pass from land to land, scale and descend mountains, cross the drawbridges of castles, followed by a suite carrying falcons on their wrists and leading leopards in leash. The oldest of the three Kings prostrates himself first to kiss the foot of the Child,

who lays a little hand upon his bald head; and the other two reverently offer their gifts enclosed in Gothic reliquaries. Amidst that splendour of brocades and state costumes, under that rain of blossoms, and through that glint of gold, the Virgin bends her gentle head and holds devoutly her hand upon her breast. Filippo Lippi causes her to express with her open right hand her timorous anxiety, as one of the Kings takes the foot of her Child to kiss it; and Ghirlandajo, also by means of the action of the hand, easily closing, signifies a sweet reassurance in surprise. Beato Angelico and Signorelli, both faithful to



RAPHAEL

[Vatican]

the traditional idea, still showed the Madonna in the act of presenting the Babe to the adoration of the Wise Men.

The art of the sixteenth century generally so arranges the composition of the Epiphany as to disclose the Holy Family to the visiting Kings, as the revelation of a vision. Leonardo da Vinci disposes around the Virgin and Child a circle of men on their knees, astonished, startled by the sight and by the light of God. The sacred group seems to hold a niche of its own in the midst of the throng. The Madonna sits no longer in profile, as in the most ancient compositions; she is in the middle of the scene, holding her naked Child, as though humility were triumphant over the greatness of the world. Thus also do Botticelli, Ghirlandajo, and Filippino Lippi conceive their wonderful Epiphanies,

decking the crowd with the costume of Italian courts, and with the pomp of the audiences of their *magnifici*. The chair of state disappears, but Mary is seated at the head of a flight of steps, as had been done long before in primitive art, in the representation at Santa Sabina; and from her place the Virgin looks down upon the devout gathering. With Ghirlandajo and other masters the hut or shed takes the shape of an oratory fallen into ruins, and amidst the fragments the Madonna sits enthroned.

Breaking with many of its own traditions, art in the sixteenth century altered the familiar lines of the composition; it returned to the primitive mingling together of the Shepherds and the Magi, it restored the stable, the angels again flew and sang as in the earliest attempts to render the Nativity. Raphael, in the pure composition of his early painting—the predella in the Vatican Gallery—brought the ingenuous persons of the scene timidly to the presence of the Holy Family—Shepherds to the right, Kings to the left; and in like manner does Peruzzi at Sant' Onofrio. Signorelli and Luini admitted the ox and the ass; and, like Luini, Correggio, in the Brera Gallery at Milan, has angels aloft rejoicing in songs; the Virgin watches the honours rendered to her Son, and in dignity and silence presents Him, her holy treasure, to the worship of men.



GENTILE DA FABRIANO

[The Louvre

THE PURIFICATION



BONANNO DI PISA

[Cathedral, Pisa

WE read in the Gospel that when the days of purification were fulfilled, the Virgin and St. Joseph carried the Child to Jerusalem to consecrate Him to the Lord, as was commanded by Moses, who exacted the ceremonial sacrifice of a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons. We read also of the dwelling at Jerusalem of the just man Simeon, who had received the promise that he should not close his eyes in death until they had looked upon the Christ. He entered into the

Temple when the parents of Jesus brought

Him thither in order to do for Him what was commanded, and took the Child in his arms, blessing God, and desiring that he might at last depart in peace, because his eyes had seen the light that was to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God's people, Israel. The parents of Jesus wondered, and Simeon blessed them, foretelling to Mary the sorrows that were to be undergone for the sake of the world. Meanwhile Anna, the ancient prophetess and adept in the service of God, being present at the ceremony in the Temple, praised the Lord and spoke of the Divine Child from whom was to come the

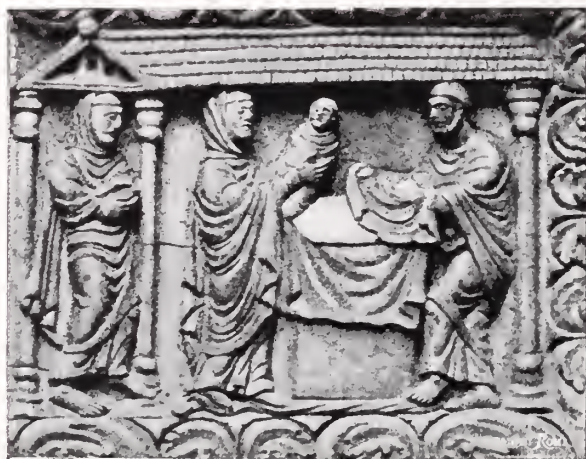
salvation of Israel. The apocryphal gospels make their own additions. Their history of the Infancy shows us the aged Simeon visited by the



SACRAMENTARIUM

[National Library, Paris]

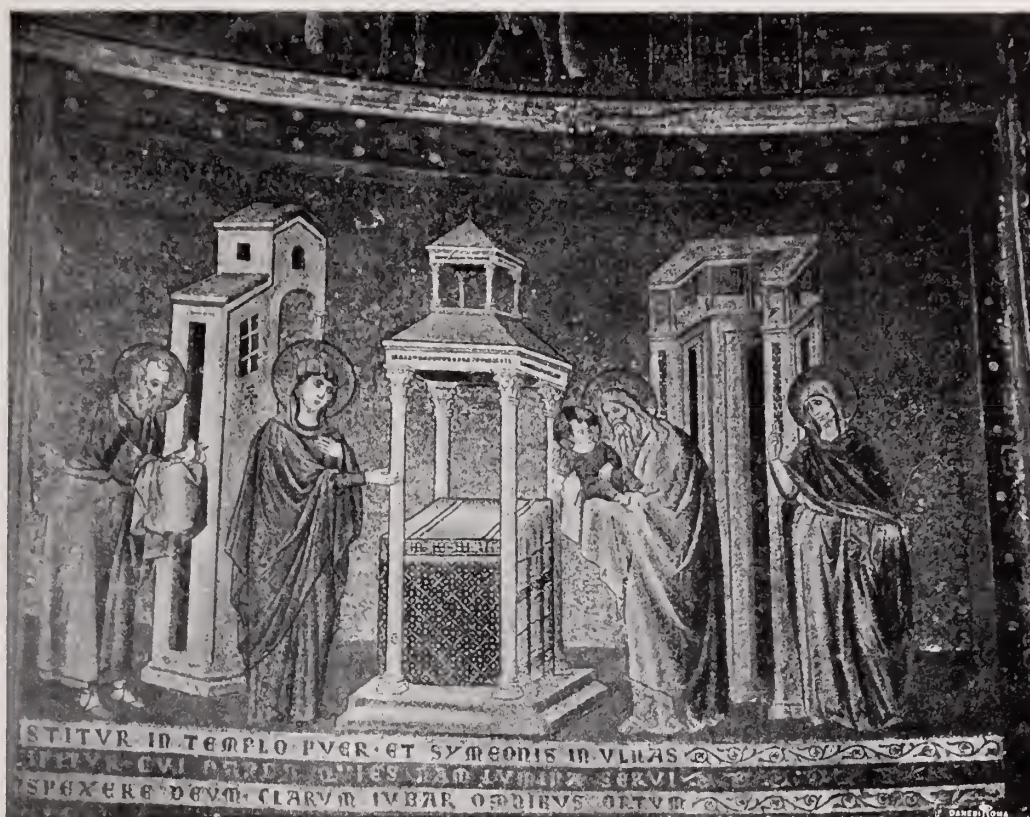
vision of a pillar of light, in the midst of which was the Child, whilst Mary, at the moment of receiving back her Babe from the priest, appeared surrounded by a circle of rejoicing angels. The other spurious gospel, called the "Nativity of Mary," describes Simeon in



IVORY

[National Library, Paris]

adoration of the Child; he takes Jesus in his mantle and kisses the soles of His feet, crying, "God has visited His people!" In the ark of Santa Maria Maggiore at Rome, the scene of the Purification and Presentation receives its fifth-century form and definition. Mary, with



MOZAIC

[Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome



NICCOLA PISANO

[Baptistery, Pisa

the bearing of an empress, advances, carrying the Child, preceded by St. Joseph, and escorted by her celestial guard of honour, towards Simeon,



GIOTTO

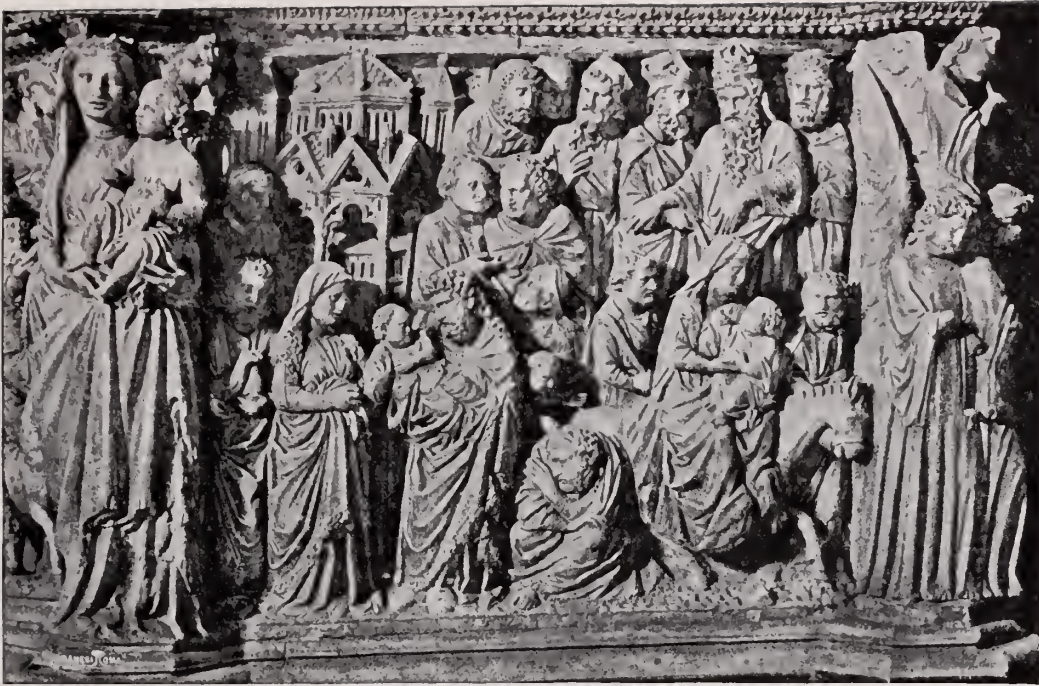
[Church of the Arena, Padua]

who holds out his reverently covered hands, whilst the prophetess Anna watches in wonder. Afterwards this classic and stately scene takes a



GUIDO DA COMO

[Pistoia]



NICCOLA PISANO

[Siena Cathedral]



GIOTTO

[Lower Church, Assisi]

homelier aspect; the solemnity of the mosaic of Santa Maria Maggiore disappears. In the illumination of the Menology of the Vatican, as in the Spalato doorway, the four persons spoken of in the Gospel stand near a ciborium. Simeon, with veiled hands, waits to receive the Son of God from His mother. St. Joseph, behind, brings the pair of turtle-



JACOPO AVANZI

[San Giorgio, Padua]

doves, and Anna prophesies with a look of inspiration. Thus does the arrangement last for some time, but the Byzantine ciborium surmounted with its cupola changes to a small open temple with hanging lamps and an altar; on the altar is a chalice. But in the bas-relief of Orcagna at Or' San Michele, instead of the altar there is a brazier, indicating purification by fire. The Virgin wears an expression of humility; St. Simeon lays aside the cloth, takes the Child in his arms, and tenderly kisses Him; St. Joseph, a very aged man, follows the Virgin, with the doves; the prophetess, holding a scroll, raises her eyes towards Heaven, in an attitude of declamation. Then the



AMB. LORENZETTI

[Florence

escort of Mary and Joseph is formed again; a handmaid amongst those that follow the Virgin does St. Joseph's office, carrying the



ANDREA ORCAGNA

[Or' San Michele, Florence]

doves; the troop of relations and friends surround the Holy Family. Niccola Pisano, in the Baptistery at Pisa, brought angels, priests, and prophets on the scene. His Madonna has again the Greek type, a face less expressive than he has given her in the Siena pulpit, where she



RELIEF

[Cathedral, Orvieto



OTTAVIANO NELLI

[Trinci Palace, Foligno
2 P

is animated and full of maternal timidity in behalf of the Child, who seeks her arms again, withdrawing Himself from those of the solemn old man; meanwhile the prophetess, behind St. Joseph, points Him out energetically to the bystanders. Giotto, at Padua, placed in the

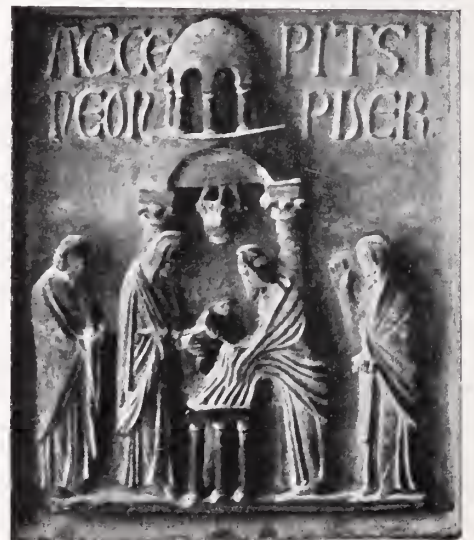
arms of Simeon the Child, who puts forth the left hand to His Mother, standing with both her arms awaiting His return. With Giotto the composition assumes a new and different grandeur. Simeon, with a Jove-like beard, and hair falling curled upon his shoulders, looks intently upon the Child, as though his eyes, before closing for ever upon the light, would see all they might of the Light of the nations. The power of that look, and the energy of his action, are proper to a great prophet. Mary, Joseph, and the handmaid—perhaps it is Salome again—are struck with surprise at the sayings of Simeon—that

their Babe is the light of the Gentiles and the glory of Israel. Mary puts out her hands anxiously to have the Child again; and Anna, covered from head to foot in her mantle, holds the scroll unfolded, and bowing her head, reveres Him who was the desire of nations, repeating the action of an angel above her head. Giotto resumes the composition of the designers and sculptors, his predecessors; this Dante of Christian painting touches at once every feeling of the heart of man. Guido da Como, in the Pistoia pulpit, expressed the reverence of Simeon and the prophetic solemnity of Anna; the Sculptor of the Orvieto bas-reliefs renders the regal dignity of the Child and



ILLUMINATION

[Cathedral, Siena]



BONANNO DA PISA

[Cathedral, Pisa]

the anxiety of Simeon; Niccola Pisano, in the Siena pulpit, represents the timidity of the Babe; but Giotto comprises all and animates these several figures and the whole related group.

For some time the composition varied little, so that Jacopo Avanzi, in the oratory of San Giorgio at Padua, added nothing of his own



FRA FILIPPO LIPPI

[Prato]

invention except the splendid architecture of a temple. The Child has here a character of domination—the small head is full of energy; Anna has the scroll in her right hand, and with the left she points out the Redeemer to the bystanders; Simeon presses the Child's little body to his breast; St. Joseph carries the doves in a basket. Gentile da Fabriano, in the fragment of a predella now at the Louvre, attempts



FRANCIA

[Cesena



VITTORE CARPACCIO

[Venice

to draw the composition together, and places his group in the interior of a building resembling a baptistery standing in a space surrounded



BARTOLOMEO MONTAGNA

[Venice

by Gothic houses and doorways. The Virgin, with one knee bent, from her place near the altar holds her arms forth to her Son who seeks to return to them, whilst Simeon holds the little body in the wide folds of his mantle. Two Florentine women draw near to the baptistery in curiosity; on the other side a beggar and an old woman bent over her stick seem to listen eagerly to the words that reach them from the sacred shrine.

Towards the close of the fifteenth century and at the beginning of the sixteenth the scene of the Purification admits a number of Saints, as in Francia's picture at the Capitol, and Carpaccio's at the Venetian

Accademia. Both these masters render the incident with much devotion and unction, Carpaccio's greater animation of mind suggesting the creation of a trio of exquisite musical angels—the gracious orchestra



LUINI

[Saronno]

that plays before the proscenium of the drama. His Simeon becomes a Bishop who wears an embroidered cope, and with him the Saints adore the Infant Christ. At times, as in the predella of Albertinelli at Florence, St. Joseph and others hold tapers in their hands, in testimony of the ancient use of candles for the ceremonies of the

festival—"Candlemas." The Gospel incident was turned to a Catholic ceremony. Nor is the priest absent from Albertinelli's picture, in which Simeon wears nothing less than a Papal tiara. Carpaccio, Francia, and Albertinelli either forget the prophetess Anna, or introduce her without her scroll, simply as a worshipper. Luigi bears her in mind at Saronno, where he treats the subject in a popular spirit and yet with a dignity all his own. His Anna has the look somewhat of an old Lombard gossip. And this is one of the last examples of art following ancient traditions, yet giving them actual reality. Here the



MARIOTTO ALBERTINELLI

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

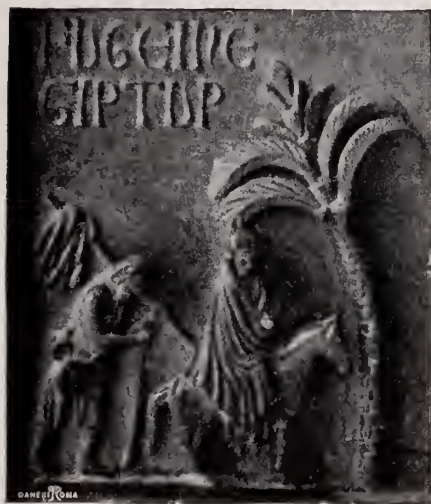
Virgin worships with folded hands, as she moves towards the Child, who turns His head with bright eyes, as though in eager search for her. A youth attired like an elegant page holds the episcopal mitre, a couple of girls follow Mary, keeping the doves, and a peasant attends them, carrying a lamb upon his shoulders, like a "good shepherd" of ancient art. Joseph speaks to a few women who express devotion and wonder. The whole is placed as a sacred drama within the marble temple, with the persons contrasted—the aged prophetess being opposed to the youthful Virgin, who has the look of a bride approaching the altar. And such a religious drama as he drew Luini might have seen enacted in Milan for some church festival; throughout his version runs as it were the sweet smile which is visible in all his works.



GENTILE DA FABRIANO

[Florence

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT



THE BRONZE DOOR OF BONANNO

[Pisa

IN the apocryphal History of Joseph the Carpenter, Christ Himself relates how the pious old man, warned in a dream of the treachery of Herod, "rose up and took my mother Mary, and carried me in his arms. And Salome followed them upon their way into Egypt; and there, forsaking his own country, he abode a year." The same is told, much less simply, in the apocryphal gospel of the "Holy Infancy," which became well known through the French translation made in the thirteenth century. According to this legend, the idols of the

Egyptians fell down at the passing of the Son of God, the air was full of the music of instruments as at the coming of a king, a near spring of water welled up under a sycamore-tree, monsters vanished, robbers took flight, and the earth brought forth balsam for the healing of the sick. The Oriental imagination added the strangest details: enchantments, human metamorphoses, dreams, miracles. The winds served the Child-God, and wild beasts were obedient to His summons. In the "History of the Nativity of Mary and of the Infancy of the Saviour,"

the Child was worshipped by dragons, lions, leopards, and wolves. On the third day of the journey Mary was weary in the desert because of the great heat of the sun; and seeing there a tree, she said to



TENTH-CENTURY IVORY

[The Louvre]

Joseph, "Let us rest awhile under its shadow." Joseph made haste to bring her into the shade, and lifted her from her saddle. Being seated, Mary raised her eyes to the branches of the palm, and, seeing them covered with fruit, she said to Joseph, "If it were possible, I



ROMANESQUE BAS-RELIEF

[Fano]

would fain eat one of these dates." And he said to her, "I marvel at thy saying, seeing how high grow these dates, and how far out of reach." Then the Child Jesus, who was in the Virgin's arms, said to the palm-tree, "Bow down thy branches, and nourish her with thy fruits." Immediately the palm-tree bent down its topmost branches even to the feet of Mary.

The representation in art of the Flight into Egypt begins in the tenth century. In the Menology of the Vatican Salome does not follow the Holy Family, but in her place is a serving-man carrying a basket upon a stick, much like the shepherd who is shown following Joachim home from the fields at his meeting with his wife Anna. Mary, seated on the ass that Joseph leads, is represented as in the other designs of the time, and the Child is shown full-face, giving the



IVORY

[Bologna

benediction to the spectator as though from an altar. The group of Mother and Child is quite distinct and separable. Before the travellers



MOSAIC

[St. Mark's, Venice



GIOTTO

[Scrovegni Chapel, Padua



TWELFTH-CENTURY PULPIT

[Groppoli, Pistoia



GIOTTO AND HIS FOLLOWERS

[Assisi

the battlemented gateway of a city is set open, and the city is represented, according to the ancient code or convention, by a woman



GIOTTO

[Assisi

wearing a turreted diadem; she holds out her arms covered with a veil, in sign of reverence. There is, of course, a remainder of Antique art in this allegory of the city of Egypt—perhaps Alexandria—to which the wanderers were betaking themselves; and in the half-open gate we may trace a reminiscence of the gateways upon the burial-places of the dead in Etruscan art. In the Louvre ivory, attributed to the tenth century, these classical recollections disappear; the Virgin is a poor wayfaring woman carrying in her lap her swaddled Child, who is no visible Redeemer giving benediction as He passes. She goes on foot, preceded by Joseph, who holds a long travelling-staff in his left hand, and with his right points to a walled city, flanked by towers,

and containing a church, a baptistery, and a belfry. Salome, wrapped up like the Virgin in a shawl, follows her, carrying also a long staff, and a man walks behind her bearing food for the journey. This representation is entirely Western; the Orientals did not thus omit the allegory of the welcoming and kneeling city. There is a Greek MS. in the National Library of Paris, in which the scene is treated precisely as in the Menology of the Vatican; the Virgin has rather the air of being enthroned than of riding upon the ass, and the Child is in the



FROM THE FAÇADE

[Orvieto Cathedra

act of blessing the faithful. So also in a Greek MS. at the Vatican, in which the female figure symbolising the city falls nearly prostrate beneath the archway of a tower. The incident is thus more familiarly and less allegorically treated in the art of the West. In the Pisan gates, one compartment shows the Virgin riding on the ass, with the bent palm-tree near, and St. Joseph walking behind with a basket on his shoulders, leaning upon his staff; nothing more. At Benevento and at Città di Castello, St. Joseph carries the Child on his shoulders and leads with a rein the ass on which is seated the Virgin. On the gate of the cathedral of Spoleto St. Joseph precedes the ass, carrying a basket slung upon his staff, and Salome urges the animal on its way with one hand. In the pulpit at Groppoli (1194), near Pistoia, Joseph leads the ass and holds a staff or whip. On the bronze doors of San Zeno at Verona, the old man wields a stick; but at Groppoli, as at

Città di Castello, there is an addition of angels who guide the Holy Family and protect it. The further we go from the Byzantine types



BEATO ANGELICO

[Florence]

and traditions, the more are the Madonna and Child turned away from the full-face and seen in profile; Mary is wrapped in a shawl rather than in a chlamys, and the Child is rolled in swaddling-clothes. If the rough but expressive work of the Archiepiscopal Palace of Fano be compared with the sculpture at Groppoli, the difference becomes apparent. Giotto at Assisi and at Padua collects all the elements elaborated in the earlier Middle Ages, and gives them life. He seems

to have illustrated two versions of the legend. At Padua, following the "Nativity of Mary and the Infancy of the Saviour," he places three



BALDASSARE PERUZZI

[Sant' Onofrio, Rome]

young men and a handmaid in the following of the Holy Family. At Assisi he introduces Salome and a countryman carrying provisions. At Padua the Divine Child, although He presses Himself lovingly to the breast of His Mother, is clothed like a priest; at Assisi He is wrapped in swaddling-clothes and has His little head covered with a hood; there the Virgin passes on her rugged way, upright, silent, and

meditative, looking before her as though she contemplated in prophecy her own destiny ; here her head is bent with an expression of sweetness, and the palm-tree bows towards her hand. At Padua an angel, winging over the heads of the wayfarers, points the road ; at Assisi two celestial messengers fly towards a city standing on the summit of a hill, and



CORREGGIO

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

one of them as he flies shows the way to the travellers. At Assisi there is in the composition a novel variety of motive, of action, and of

grouping. Even St. Joseph, turning his head alike in Giotto's two frescoes, is not bent in the Paduan painting, either by the robes carried



CORREGGIO

[Naples

on his shoulder or by the weariness of the journey; and the young followers in this work have not the simplicity, as they walk chatting to one another, which marks the figure of the Assisian Salome, who looks like an Alpine peasant. The composition of the Flight into Egypt thus took definite form, with varieties of detail. It is seldom that the incidents rejected by Giotto are re-introduced. But in the

work of the school of the Pisani in the façade at Orvieto, the Virgin, covered with a veil, is seated on the ass, and holds in her arms the naked Child, whilst a dragon close by retires into his cave as a snail retreats into its shell; and this recalls the detail of the legend which



CORREGGIO

[Parma

tells of certain dragons which came forth from their caverns to adore the passing God, and then withdrew again.

Gentile da Fabriano, in the fifteenth century, chooses the simplest possible form of group. In the predella of his great painting at Florence he has a little ass preceded by St. Joseph, who leans upon his staff, and handles the bridle; the Virgin holds the Child in swaddling-clothes, and two women follow, treading the stony road at the foot of a hillock

covered with fruit-trees ; a city appears, with machicolated walls, towers, churches, and baptistery. The scene is obviously Tuscan, and full of Tuscan charm. Fra Angelico, in like manner, has a road opening between flower-covered mounds, and leading up a height planted with olive and cypress ; and his Madonna presses to her breast, as the dearest thing in heaven or earth, the Child she carries. The little ass steps towards the bending palm, gently carrying the gentle Mother and Child.

In the florid time of the Renaissance the incident has less dignity. To avoid the homeliness of the donkey-journey, painters begin to paint the halt—called in the history of art “the Reposal”—rather than the progress. Correggio, in his *Madonna della Scodella*, has a perfect arrangement, and the equilibrium peculiar to himself ; so too with the *Madonna della Palma* at the Uffizi. The legend tells of the weariness of the Virgin, who alighted from her saddle and sate in the shadow of the palm-tree, the fruit of which the Child miraculously gathered ; and this done, the tree sprang back at the word of Christ, whilst from its root a fountain sprang forth to refresh the Holy Family. Correggio has gathered the series of incidents into one moment in his *Madonna della Scodella* ; the water flows under the tree that overshadows the Mother and Child, and the angels are busy bending the branches, from which St. Joseph gathers dates. The Virgin smiles upon her little Boy, who takes the fruit with one hand from His foster-father. Further off, the angel who has been the guide on the road ties up the ass. A little figure with an urn, the personification of the fountain, is close to the water—a detail that recalls that classic tradition which lingered so long in mediæval art. Correggio had perhaps before his eyes some ancient illumination from which he borrowed the incidents of this work, called by Vasari a “divine painting.” Certain it is that the Cinquecento preferred the Reposal to the Flight ; it gives the ass a subordinate place, in the second or third plane of the picture ; the Holy Family is gently gathered under the shade of a wayside tree ; sometimes the Virgin, with head bowed over that of her Son, has fallen asleep. A painter of the seventeenth century, Saraceni, introduced, in his picture in the Doria Gallery, an angel making music to cheer the sleepers in their dreams ; St. Joseph holds before this heavenly minstrel the paper of music from which he plays, and the

ass comes forward as though he too enjoyed the sound. In this incident Saraceni borrowed an idea of Correggio's in the picture called the "Zingarella," at Naples, which is a fragment of a "Reposal." Here too the angels grasp the branches of the palm which covers the sacred group with transparent shadow, and the Child sleeps upon the breast of the Mother; God rests amid green foliage watched by the young angels. There is the suggestion of the sleeper's dreams.



BERNARDINO LUINI

[Saronno

THE FINDING OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

THE Boy Christ sits in the chair of the Temple, surrounded by the noble figures of the old men who listen to His wisdom and answers, and are full of wonder. The face of the Child assumes for the first time the gravity of a teacher's look, the eyes speak, the right hand is gravely lifted up. Meanwhile His father and mother enter, at the end of their search. Joseph has the air of a simple man, astonished to hear reasoning that is above his understanding, and he hangs upon the words of his foster-son. Mary, full of joy, is also full of thought.

Thus does Giotto compose the Finding in the Temple. Knowing the mind of man, he expresses various feelings, and differences of impression; one of the doctors retires pondering; another lends his ear; another weighs what he has heard, grasping his flowing beard; one has his fingers at his throat somewhat as though the words of Christ annoyed him. It may be said that Giotto in the Arena fresco traced the way that was to be trodden in the future by the painter of the

Lord's Supper, the divine Leonardo himself. Nowhere else has the Dispute with the Doctors so much solemnity as between the Gothic pillars of the Temple of Giotto's work ; after his example, Mary remained



BONIFACIO VENEZIANO

[Pitti Palace, Florence]

in art the tender mother, the simple countrywoman, confronted with the greatness and wisdom of her Son. Usually she is placed at one side, as though she had but just become a witness of the triumph of the answers of the Child in the assembly of the wise ; and thus she



LUDOVICO MAZZOLINO

[Berlin Museum

stands in the paintings of Mazzolino, who repeated the subject again and again, and in the beautiful work of Bonifacio Veneziano in the Pitti Palace. But Mazzolino did not succeed in giving much expression to the round face of the Virgin, and conveyed the idea of her devotion merely by joining her hands, while her Divine Son seems to take no heed of the entrance of His parents. She listens to the word



GIOTTO AND HIS FOLLOWERS

[Assisi]

of God, and worships. In like manner is she drawn by Bonifacio; humbly and piously she walks into the Temple, while the Boy reasons of the Law of His Father.

At Saronno, Bernardino Luini places the Virgin in the throng of the doctors; she presses near to her Son, and He, about to give the ambiguous answer recorded in the Gospel, points upward indeed, but turns upon her a little face full of gentleness; she expresses the anxiety of her heart and a timid reverence. Art sets itself to soften and sweeten all things; and amongst the doctors of the Temple are to be found

the gentle figures of the later companions and disciples of Christ as Luini drew them; among the heads of the venerable Jews appears the youthful and beautiful face of the Evangelist St. John; Mary is once more the humble handmaid of the Annunciation; and Joseph has the aspect assigned later to Christ Himself. The composition was cast into a gentle mould; the prophets, some of whom are not turned towards the young Christ, and who hold their discussions apart, have no resemblance to the solemn audience seated to listen to the Teacher in the work of Giotto. For no voice is to be heard except the voice of Jesus; Mary and Joseph enter the sanctuary, but not to ask their Son the reason of His actions; all give ear, for it is God Who speaks.

THE AGONY OF CHRIST

IN the Agony in the Garden, Mary takes part only in the later periods of art when she appears overcome and swooning in the arms of the holy women. There is, nevertheless, one scene which, albeit taken from the



CORREGGIO

[London

apocryphal gospels, was recognised, under beautiful forms, in Italian art of the sixteenth century—this is the farewell between Our Saviour and His Mother before the beginning of the Passion. Correggio represents it in the pale light of the moon, with four figures casting their long

shadows upon the earth, whilst in the distance the last gleams of twilight are on the point of vanishing, with a glance upon the darkness and the blue mists of the foreground. The genius of the master appears in all its power in the picture, belonging to a private collection in London, which shows Christ on His knees before His Mother, with bowed head and folded arms, awaiting her blessing, and seeming to murmur His leave-taking in the form of a prayer. St. John, who stands by, watches with clasped fingers and bent brows; and the Virgin, who cannot stand, so struck to the heart is she with grief, fails in facing her Son; her eyes have lost sight and light, her lips are half unclosed as though the sob had just left them. She drops into the arms of the gentle Magdalen, and lets fall upon her supporting arm the hand but now raised either to entreat her Son or to give Him her benediction.

A comparison between this picture and another of the same subject by Lorenzo Lotto in the Berlin Gallery may serve to show how erroneous has been the conjectural association of the work of Correggio with that of Lotto. In the Berlin picture are a sullen St. Peter, an old woman who twists her mouth, a little dog playing with the dress of the donor of the picture, a cat with phosphoric eyes, in the background a garden walk, in the foreground a branch of cherries and an orange. Correggio creates a drama; Lotto makes a composition of the first materials that a shop at hand could yield him. Lotto follows, in his colouring, his ordinary course, and gives to all the flesh alike a rosy *impasto*, makes his shadows earthy and greenish, and decorates the borders of his draperies with reticulations, rhombs, and spots. Allegri seeks the idea in a very ecstasy of love and ardour of truth. Lorenzo Lotto is a learned master; Correggio is the genius. The one gives graceful and simple action to his figures; the other gives to his own eternal life. Lorenzo Lotto continues tradition; Correggio completes it.

The iconography of the leave-taking of Christ and His Mother before the Passion seems to be principally local to Venice. Another painting of this subject in the Fine Arts Gallery at Vienna, attributed there to the Lombard school, belongs in fact to the Venetian. We find certain forms of art and thought developed in one region of Italy more than in another. Here they are conspicuous, there they have hardly any hold; like plants that, according as the soil suits them well or ill, display their flowers in one place, and in another leave their idle seeds in an unfruitful ground.



PERUGINO

[Santa Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi, Florence]

THE CRUCIFIXION



FIFTH-CENTURY DOOR

[Santa Sabina, Rome]

IN the school of young slaves on the Palatine a boy, in the third century, mocked one of his companions by scratching on the wall a drawing of a crucified figure with an ass's head, and of a man turned towards the image, with an inscription in Greek that may

be thus translated: "Alexamenos worships his God." That jest of a Pagan boy remains with us to-day, and it is the oldest "crucifix" we have, although it did but note the accusation brought from the second



TENTH-CENTURY IVORY

[Florence

century against the Christians, that they worshipped a God with the head of an ass. Minucius Felix, who records the blasphemous charge, exclaims, "How shall I make an image of God, seeing that man is made in His image? It is better to harbour God in our spirit and in the depth of our heart." Thus the primitive Christian was inclined to eschew the image that reduced within limits and confined within narrow forms the idea

of Divinity. But although he avoided direct portraiture, he clung to signs. In the shape of the good shepherd, of the dolphin, of the lamb, he, as it were, hid his Lord. Certain it is that he never showed Him fastened to the cross of shame upon Golgotha. Realism never drew his eyes down from the heavens, nor had it power over the early Christian art, still true to some remains of classic tradition. Instead of the sufferings of the body, that art delighted in dwelling on the joys of the spirit, and on faith in heavenly peace and life eternal. But when the Church came forth from the Catacombs, it was by means of the Cross that she chose to express her victory. The Cross was at once a mournful and a glorious symbol; it appeared crowned upon Roman arms and upon Roman tombs, it was jewelled in the constellated apse, and gave its form to the Church. Upon many a sarcophagus is carved the figure of Christ, not fixed to the cross, but standing on the rock from the striking of

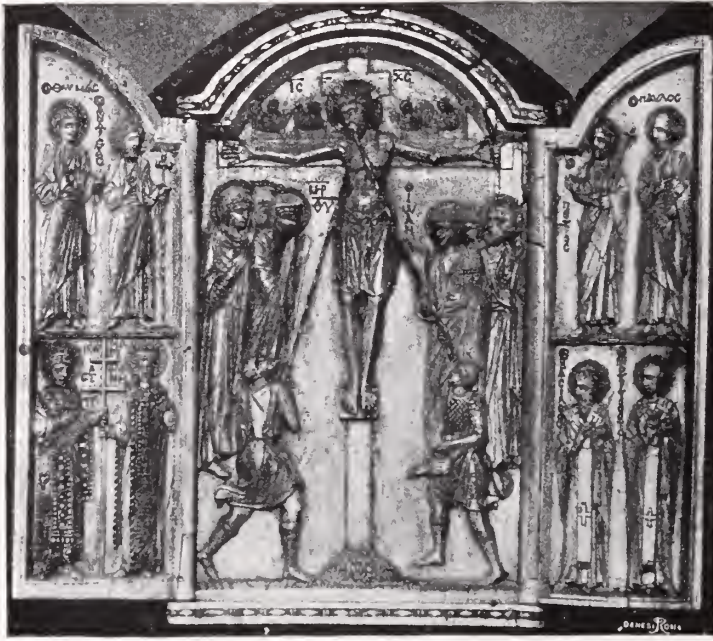
which flowed the four rivers of Paradise. In the apse of many a basilica Christ assumes the shape of a lamb at the foot of a luminous cross. Paulinus of Nola, who, towards the end of the fourth century, describes the paintings wherewith the churches were then adorned, says that the mystery of the Trinity was signified by means of symbols; an aureole



ELEVENTH-CENTURY FRESCO

[Sant' Urbano, near Rome]

surrounded the cross; the Apostles in the shape of doves surrounded a luminous globe, the mystic Lamb was with His cross upon a rock whence flowed the sources of life everlasting, the four Gospels; the Eternal Father was manifested by thunder from the skies, and by a hand stretched from the cloud and holding a crown; the Dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, flew from on high; and behind the rock stood palm-trees as a sign of the gardens of Paradise. At the waters of life running like rivulets through fields, human souls in the shapes of birds, of peacocks marked with eyes in their plumage, or of thirsty deer, hastened to drink. To this



TWELFTH-CENTURY BYZANTINE IVORY

[Berlin]

pure symbolism and allegory succeeded the art that attempted to illustrate the history of the Gospels, and to give an actual form of portraiture to what had taken place on earth in the time of Christ and after.

Upon the cypress-wood door of Santa Sabina on the Aventine, a church founded at his own expense by Peter of Illyria in the fifth century over the

substructure of the temples of Diana and of Juno Regina, is an *intaglio* of Christ crucified with the two thieves. This figure has long hair that falls upon the shoulders, as it was the practice, in Christian monuments, to represent Orientals; the eyes are open; the arms are extended somewhat in the attitude of a suppliant, and a slight cincture is round the body. This bas-relief, the most ancient of all Christian representations of the Crucifixion, has the undecided, confused workmanship of the sarcophagus-sculptors of that age. In the other compartments of the door are represented the glory of Christ and the sacred



LITURGICAL COMB IN IVORY

[Cologne]

mysteries. Peter of Illyria must often have turned to the carvings of this door, lifted the veils of silk or gold that covered it, and, like Zacha-



EARLY TWELFTH-CENTURY MOSAIC

[San Clemente, Rome]

rias in one of these bas-reliefs, taught the Levites and the people, by means of the catechism it contained, the doctrines of the religion thenceforward to be predominant on the earth. This carved Crucifixion in cypress wood, so roughly sketched as not even to indicate the arms of the cross, was, however, an innovation and unique. Christian art seemed



TWELFTH-CENTURY IVORY BOOK-BINDING

[Lyskirchen

to refrain from repeating the image, and continued the allegory of the mystical Lamb, even when it carved the cross, as may be seen in a medallion at the intersection of the arms of the cross upon one of the columns of the ciborium in St. Mark's, Venice, a work of the sixth century, and also in the imperial cross at St. Peter's, Rome, a gift to the basilica from Justin II. and Sophia, his consort. The representation of the human figure seemed to grow more and more difficult to the art of these

ages, striving after nature and reality by rigid shapes, groping stiffly after truth, and failing after all to strike life from the imprisoning marble. Meantime, while the door of Santa Sabina in Rome was being carved, and the ciborium for St. Mark's, a worker in ivory (whose carving is in the British Museum) was making a representation of the Crucifixion, a true illustration of the Scripture; Christ is on the cross, and at the right stand Mary and St. John the Evangelist, Mary being entirely enveloped in her mantle.

The convocation of the Greek Episcopate in 692 revoked the permission to represent the Saviour in the form of a lamb, and directed that for that symbol should be substituted "a sacred image of Christ." Thus runs the decree: "It is the custom to make a figure of a lamb, according to the indication given by St. John the Baptist, the Precursor of Christ, which lamb is a symbol of Divine grace, and, according to the Law, of the true Lamb Himself, Christ our God. To these ancient signs, these figures permitted by the Church, do we give honour as symbols of the truth; but we would rather have the truth itself which beareth witness

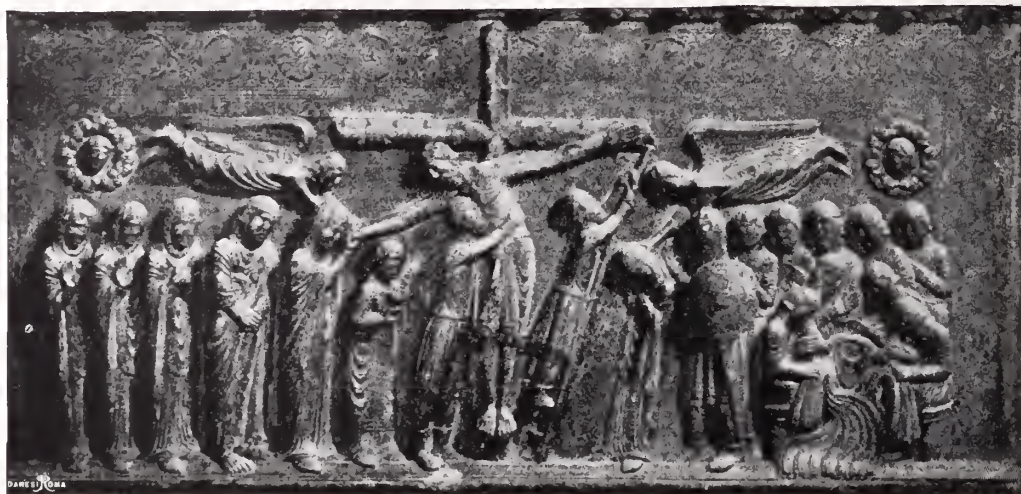
to the Law. And in order that pictures may manifest the truth perfectly in the sight of all men, we command that in place of the Lamb, as Redeemer of the world, Christ shall be set forth in His own human shape." At the time of the issuing of this decree, Christian art had already begun to put aside the allegory or allegories that had taken the place of the figure of Christ; not only the crucifix, but the scene of the Crucifixion had taken form. In the Syriac codex of the monk Rabula, in the Laurentian Library (586), the Crucifixion is treated so much as an actual scene—so historically—that Crowe and Cavalcaselle doubted of the authenticity of the date, which, however, Bayet and others have maintained apparently with good reason. Christ, clad in a sleeveless tunic, the sun and moon above the cross, the two crucified thieves, Longinus who pierces the side of the Divine Victim, the soldier lifting the sponge with vinegar and gall, the Virgin, St. John, the holy women, the soldiers playing for the garment of the Lord—these actual incidents were added, towards the end of the sixth century, to the general, typical treatment, until then practised, of the Crucifixion. The Virgin, crowned with a nimbus, lifts her mantle, as though with it she would cover her face, after the antique manner of signifying grief, but there is no expression of ordinary human passion, the gesture has no counterpart in the face. It was yet too soon for the presentation of dramatic feeling, and these accessory and expressive figures are still rarely found. For example, in the phials presented by the pious empress Theodolinda to the basilica of Monza, and brought chiefly from Jerusalem, we find designs in which the artist has evidently still hesitated in touching the figure of the Saviour crucified; on one of



THIRTEENTH-CENTURY IVORY

[Rome]

these *ampullæ* is traced the head of Christ, encircled by a nimbus, high on the cross; and on another an indication of the body with open arms,



BENEDETTO ANTELAMI

[Parma]

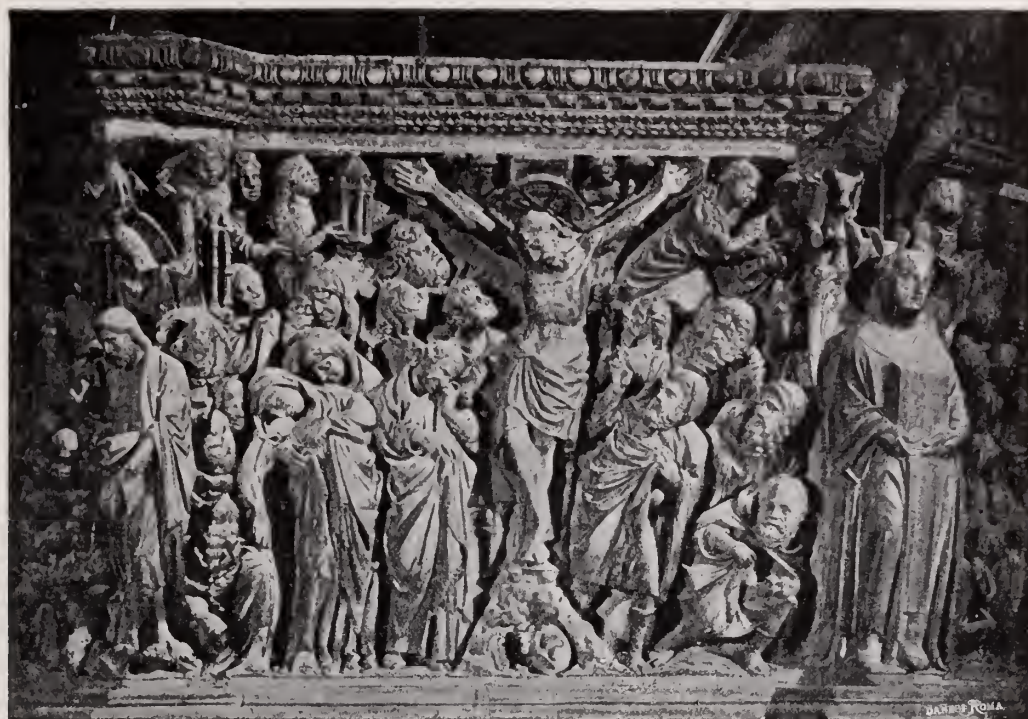
but no cross, as at Santa Sabina. The sun and the moon, the Virgin and St. John, the two thieves, the bystanders, are discernible upon these reliquaries brought to Europe from the Holy Places; but there is small



THIRTEENTH-CENTURY MOSAIC

[St. Mark's, Venice]

scope for action upon so limited a surface; moreover, at the time when these vessels were given to pilgrims, as records of their perilous journey



NICCOLA PISANO

[Siena



GIOTTO

[Assisi

of devotion, the cross was a sign of the faith rather than an accessory in the scene of martyrdom and death. Towards the close of the sixth century, however, the crucifix was conspicuous in churches, in houses, in public places. In the church, between the sacred vessels of enamel or lapis lazuli and the embroidered curtains of Byzantine tissue or cloths



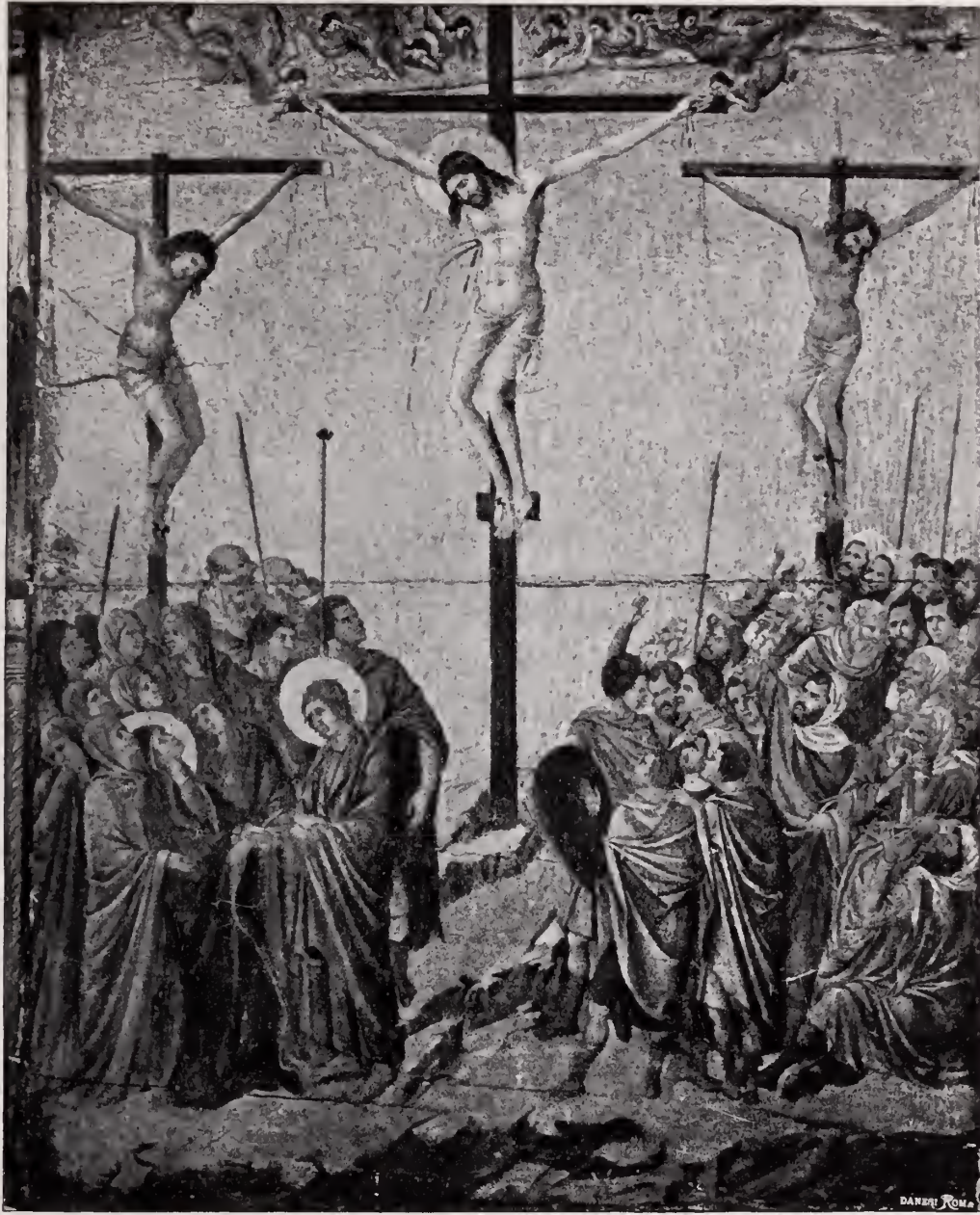
GIOTTO

[Scrovegni Chapel, Padua]

of Tyre, stood the jewelled cross; in the forum it was raised amongst imperial statues, and victors and vanquished alike did it homage; they wore it upon their armour as a defence against misfortune. Barbarians made rude and sometimes horrible images of the crucifix to be used in war.

With the effigy of Christ crucified were associated occasionally other figures, creatures of legend, of the *Acta Pilati*, or the "gospel" of Nicodemus; but in time the scene of the Crucifixion had all its parts studied, its places assigned, and its persons perfectly characterised. In

the seventh century the narrative of the Gospels is represented closely and with accuracy. St. Matthew and St. Luke make record of the dark-



DUCCIO DI BONINSEGNA

[Siena]

ness that covered the sun, and the sun is present to obey the signal of obscurity; the moon, too, attends. Sometimes the one is represented by the allegory of a youth, and the other by that of a maid with the crescent on her head. The words of Christ on the cross, when He

said to His Mother, "Woman, behold thy son," and to the disciple, "Behold thy mother," are faithfully illustrated by the art that places the Mother on one side of the cross and St. John at the other; the holy women are grouped near the Virgin because they are spoken of in the Gospel. On this side and on that stand the crosses of the two thieves, between whom the primitive artist tries carefully to mark the difference; the penitent robber is represented on the *ampulla* at Monza, for example, with his eyes turned towards the Saviour, and the impenitent with his head averted. All these figures—the thieves, the Virgin and John, the sun and moon, the angels—are arranged according to the most rigid rules of symmetry. Thus, in smaller proportions than those of the figures of the Madonna and the disciple stands Longinus,



BERNARD SENESE

[Arezzo]

with his spear, as representative of the Gentiles converted to the Cross, and he who bears the sponge of gall upon the rod of hyssop

represents Judaism stubborn and unconvinced. Christ is calm, with open eyes, impassible, as though the nails had not pierced His living



GIOTTINO

[Santa Maria Novella, Florence]

hands and feet; He stretches, without an effort, unbent arms, and props His feet upon a small projection of the cross. This is God unmindful of the agony of the members He has assumed, and victor over death. At times the cross that bears Him puts forth green leaves, standing as a symbol of the tree of life, and perhaps suggesting the legend of the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus: "Father Adam commanded Seth his son that he should tell his sons, and the patriarchs, and the prophets, the things he had heard spoken by Michael the Archangel, at the time that this son of Adam went up to the gate of Paradise to entreat of the Lord that He would give him some oil of the tree of mercy for the anointing of his father, who was sick. And therefore Seth said to the holy fathers, patriarchs, and prophets: I prayed to the Lord, being before the gate of Paradise; and there appeared to me Michael and said to me, 'The Lord God has sent me to thee; seek not the oil of the tree of mercy for the anointing of thy father Adam, for it cannot be given thee until after a thousand and fifty

years, at which time the Son of God, being full of love, shall come upon earth, and shall raise up the body of Adam and of the others who are dead.'” The apocryphal scripture proceeds ingeniously to explain the legend: Seth, Abraham, or a son of Noah planted in the



PAINTER OF THE EARLY FIFTEENTH CENTURY

[Florence

earth a slip or a seed that had been brought out of the Garden of Eden, and from this grew a tree which supplied Moses and Aaron with their wonder-working rods. Cut down to serve in the building of the Temple, the tree was nevertheless not so used; it was placed as a bridge across a river, and there it remained, although the Queen of Sheba, who was able to see into the future, foretold the destiny of the wood. Afterwards it was cast into a pool, and the waters were full of its healing virtue, and when the water was dried up it was taken

for the making of the cross of Christ. After the Crucifixion it was buried, as were also the two crosses of the thieves (and here the



JACOPO AVANZI

[Padua]

Gospel of Nicodemus gives place to another legend), until Helena, mother of Constantine, found it upon Mount Calvary, where a temple of Venus had been built, discovering it by the indications supplied to her by a learned Jew who had treasured every record, every tradition relating to that spot of earth. But the three crosses were indistinguishable from one another, because the writing placed upon the cross of the Saviour had fallen from its place. Then Macarius, Bishop of

Jerusalem, suggested that upon the three crosses should be laid three sick men, so that the Lord's might be discovered. So it was done, and the sick man who lay upon one of the crosses was immediately healed.



JACOPO AVANZI

[Padua]

Helena then worshipped Him who had been fastened to the wood, but not the wood, says St. Ambrose. It is as a King, amongst the emblems of His victory, that Oriental art chiefly represents Christ upon the cross; for instance in the work known as the "Christ of Nico-

demus," or the "Holy Face of Lucca," dated not later than the seventh century, Christ appears in ornaments of regal or sacerdotal splendour and a tunic with sleeves. In the apocryphal "Acts of Pilate" we read that the Lord, being stripped of His vesture, had girt Himself with a linen cloth, the legend adding that it was the Virgin who furnished this covering for Her Divine Son's body by giving Him the veil from her own head.

While art was labouring to illustrate Scripture and legend, the Iconoclasts were beginning to rage, and the images of the Crucifixion were especially the objects of their destructive zeal. They were indeed further consecrated by the ensuing persecution, and those who, in spite of violence, persevered in their use adorned them with new incidents and allusions. Through the poverty of the form the ideas of the artist appear, piercing through the unmanageable material, if only after the manner of hieroglyphics; we see that human piety has stood



JACOPO AVANZI OF BOLOGNA

[Rome]

by the rigid body of the Saviour, and that it is human feeling that causes the sun and the moon to hide their weeping faces, as in the gold crucifix of Aix-la-Chapelle. The Divine Hand is stretched forth from heaven, as in the primitive designs, but amid tongues of flame as from a furnace, and places a crown upon the head of the Son. The Dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, is within a circle, and at the foot of the cross twines a horned snake, in allusion to the war of evil against mankind, and of the prince of darkness against Christ. The Saviour

bows His head upon one shoulder, the breast is contracted and the knees bend, as though a thrill passed through the body at the thrust of the lance. Thus the grief of the universe, expressed by the weeping sun and moon, answers to the suffering of Christ. The Virgin is always, at this period of art, composed, and looks rather like a pious visitant of Christ in His martyrdom. In the poem, of remote antiquity, erroneously attributed to Gregory Nazianzen, the Virgin at the foot of the cross receives the praises of her Son, with His exhortations to shed no tears, for all that had been in the prophecies must



BEATO ANGELICO

[Florence]

needs come to pass. And Mary, full of wonder at the generosity and sanctity of Christ, who pardons on the cross, replies that through three nights she will look for the rising of the sun and for the fulfilment of the promise. But when her Son makes no answer she cries, "Would to God that for Thy soul I had given mine, which I care not for. Now does darkness cover mine eyes; without Thee I desire to be buried, and to be hidden in the earth. In vain, then, did I nurse Thee, my Son. . . . No longer can I stand and look upon Thee. Wherefore art Thou silent? Wherefore openest not Thou Thy mouth? Speak yet again to Thy Mother!" In the act of speaking this last appeal stands the Virgin in several ivories of this date, in the Libraries of Paris, of Munich, and of Florence; she has her hands held forth with a movement of urgent invocation,

In a ninth-century Crucifixion, besides the sun and the moon, Mary and John, the centurion and the bearer of the hyssop and the sponge, and the reptile at the foot of the cross, we find the Church and the Synagogue meeting with unfolded banners; the Church gathers in a chalice the blood flowing from the wound in the side of Christ, the



BEATO ANGELICO

[Florence

Synagogue turns away from the cross. Below, in a kind of foundation to the cross, rises Adam with the dead, swaddled in the manner of mummies, from uncovered graves and from the doors of monuments; and these look abroad upon the upper world—the earth bringing forth living creatures, the sea figured as Neptune. Rome herself, the capital of Christendom, appears, in the diptych of Rambona, under the shape of a wolf suckling Romulus and Remus, and represents the West—that West towards which Christ, according to a popular tradition, turned His face when He yielded up His Spirit. The whole world mourns

over the death of God, and the cross is raised, less as the Tree of Life planted upon the mystical rock, than as the funeral sign before



DONATELLO

[Berlin]

the face of all nations, standing above the earth and the seas; and, instead of the blue waters of the rivers of Paradise at its foot, the skull and the bones of Calvary, the burial-place of kings.

In the midst of this desolation the Mother of Christ draws near to the cross, leaning her head upon one hand, as does St. John who goes



DONATELLO

[Florence

to meet her, and reaching out the other towards her Son. Her face remains composed amid her grief; she is not desperate, she does not cry out, nor does she faint as the *Acta Pilati* relate, nor fall with her face to the ground as the Venerable Bede would have her in his

Meditations. It was not then in the power of art, with its stiff materials and its difficult expression, to suggest the depths of the grief of Mary. Only by showing her mantle drawn over her head, or her cheek drooping on her hand—according to the ancient convention for the signification of sorrow—did the art of design attempt to render the maternal woe, and by a reaching out of the empty arms to indicate the maternal tenderness. From on high, in sign of the mourning of Heaven, come the pure spirits, the winged messengers; their heads fall aside, their hands are held out to Christ, they crown the cross. Later the artist makes them wait upon the dying Saviour with chalices in their hands for gathering the drops of the Divine blood. Now the Church does this office, now Father Adam, now again Joseph of Arimathæa, the custodian of the Holy Grail according to the legend that unites the history of the Death of the Redeemer with the romance of the Round Table.

In the intermediate period, and indeed until the close of the thirteenth century, art combined all these incidents and characters in its Crucifixions, or chose from among them now one group and now another, reviving some ideas that had passed for a time out of sight, repeating others again and again. We find an early twelfth-century work in the basilica of San Clemente, Rome, representing the Redeemer fastened to the cross, from the arms of which fly twelve doves, symbols of the Apostles; above, a hand comes forth from the clouds; below, at the foot of the rock upon which the cross is raised, flow the four rivers of Eden, which water the pastures of the flock of Christ, and at which pelicans, swans, peacocks, and deer quench their thirst. From the root of the cross spread green branches that trail through the whole of the apse, and amongst them rest saints, flowers, and birds, inmates of the garden of felicity. These designs illustrate, and are illustrated by, the verses of Paolino da Nola. In the candlestick at San Paolo Without the Walls (twelfth century) the crucified sculptured figure is vested, as in the sixth-century work, in a sleeveless tunic; and, as in the Santa Sabina crucifix, it has colossal proportions in comparison with the figures of the crucified thieves at the sides. And whilst the mediæval artists sought, on one hand, to recover the simplicity of the first Crucifixions, on the other they tended to imitate the Syriac designs, perhaps because of the celebrity of certain images, such as



DONATELLO

[San Lorenzo, Florence

the Volto Santo of Lucca, by which William Rufus, King of England, was wont to swear. The crucifix of Robert Curzon, mentioned by Lady Eastlake, as likewise that reproduced by Grimouard de Saint Laurent, has the look of an idol. The crown, once made of flowers and leaves, now changed to the semblance of a royal diadem, is no longer held by the supreme hand of the Eternal over the head of Christ, but rests upon His brow. A tunic bordered with jewels, and a cincture also set with gems, clothe the figure of the Pontiff and King, Who with arms stretched out in a straight line, and with long hair disposed upon the shoulders, stands vertically against the cross. By this crucifix, with so many features imitated from the past, we might suppose that the artist had renounced the example of his nearer predecessors and their arduous efforts in the development of plastic design. But, notwithstanding these isolated examples, the whole course of art was a forward one.

From the twelfth century onward the symbol of the Eternal Father's hand is discontinued, but that of the half-figure or bust of an aged man takes its place, as in the representations of the Creation and other compositions in which the direct Divine action is to be signified. From the side of Christ flow the blood and water, and sprinkle the figure of Longinus who falls to the ground. In the Crucifixion of Sant' Urbano at Caffarella—a twelfth-century fresco—Christ has His head surrounded with a crown, not of flowers, not of jewels, but of thorns drawing blood. In the greater number of designs of this period appears the figure of the centurion, who, beholding the commotion of nature at the death of Christ, confesses Him to have been a just man; but in earlier art he had no place, probably because the intention was to represent Christ before the moment of death; but from the eleventh century onward he is conspicuous. In the crucifix of the Arezzo Museum Christ hangs from the cross with closed eyes. Christ then being dead, the centurion made part of the group (no longer symbolical, but historical), and with lifted right hand pointed to the innocent Victim of mankind. These several components of the scene of the Crucifixion in art met together with some confusion until the time came when the rules, as it were, of the sacred drama were drawn up. The dramatic spirit made an outburst in the work of Giunta at Assisi, where St. Francis on his knees embraces tenderly the foot of the cross, Mary Magdalene

throws up her arms with a tragic gesture, and a flight of angels in tears beat their wings around the head of Christ, and gather into chalices the blood from the Redeemer's wounds.



MARCO PALMEZZANO

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

In the thirteenth century we find the symbols so reverently used by the preceding ages hidden amongst the realistic accessories employed in the art of the thirteenth century ; when allegory reappears it is with

life and movement, at any rate without the tranquillity inherited by the early Christian ages from Antiquity. For example, in the works of Niccola Pisano and his school, at Pisa, at Siena, at Pistoia, the Church, bearing a vase or model of the baptismal font, accompanied or herself carried by an angel, moves towards the figure of Christ, and the Synagogue, in the form not of a young maid or bride, but in that of an aged woman, is repulsed by a second angel. These and other personifications were soon to pass into disuse, for that, not having been



PERUGINO

[Villa Albani, Rome]

devised in the primitive days of Christian art, they lacked—as did other inventions of their time—the consecration of pious custom or the seal of perdurable tradition. In the thirteenth century, moreover, attention seems to become fixed more closely upon the person of Christ, upon the body hanging from the arms with fingers cramped, upon the brow ploughed by deep lines, the strained muscles, the writhing form, the feet (one placed upon the other, and both pierced by one nail) rigid upon the support fastened upon the stem of the cross. Innumerable are the colossal crucifixes of that period, having on the arms of the cross, or elsewhere upon the wood, or around it as a kind of frame, representations of the principal persons in the drama of the Passion and Death of Christ. The spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, who aspired to suffer even with the Crucified One, and who received the stigmata as a reward of his love, revived and renewed throughout Europe the veneration of the images of the Crucifixion. The repre-



PERUGINO

[Florence

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sentation of the act of Redemption, changed by degrees into a scene of the triumph of the Godhead, began then to assume a peculiar character of tenderness. Christ ceased to be a hero amid trophies of victory, paludaments of the priesthood, or kingly ornaments, and became Man offering Himself a sacrifice for men; His symbol was the pelican giving her blood for food to her young—and this is the only symbol added by the imagination of the fourteenth century to the allegories of the past. In the lower church at Assisi, Giotto represents the scenes of Golgotha, and by the warmth of his own feeling he unites the several persons who had been figured apart. Angels fly about the head of the dying Christ, striking their own faces, rending their garments, expressing a desperate grief; the Magdalen presses forward reverently to the feet of the Saviour; John walks with his hands joined under his chin, and is followed by two holy women, who give way to their grief, whilst others support the Virgin fainting with powerless hand and head dropping on her shoulder, and veiled in the shadow of death. On the other side, St. Francis adores the Crucified, and seems to lift himself towards his Lord; and behind him, on their knees, two by two, other Friars of Assisi are absorbed in prayer. Longinus prays standing, with joined hands; the centurion, turning to the multitude of the Jews, proclaims with a soldierly gesture the Divinity of Christ, and the people retire full of thought. Humanity seems torn with grief in presence of the body of Christ as it hangs upon the cross inclining a head that attends to the cries and prayers of so many hearts. At a stroke Giotto suppressed both the mediæval materialism and the intrusive symbol, and created the scene as art should apprehend it. Cimabue, at Assisi, had caused the Mother to approach the cross with difficult steps; Niccola Pisano, in the Pisa pulpit, had shown her falling into the arms of the women, with open eyes and one hand upon her breast in sign of her anguish. Giotto at Padua represented the sudden swooning of the Virgin, the tottering of her limbs weakened by grief, the drooping of her head, the swaying arms and eyes closed as though in sleep; the beautiful oval of the face of a woman still in the flower of her age is lightened by a luminous nimbus; and the figure, albeit bent, preserves still the grandeur of maternity. More dramatically, Cavallini at Assisi, and (later) Duccio di Boninsegna at Siena caused the Mother, held up by the holy women, to draw near

and fix a last look upon her dying Son. And Giovanni Pisano, in the pulpit at Pistoia, following out this idea, has the Madonna falling backwards inanimate into the arms of her companions, yet with her face uplifted, as though it was the sight of the pain of Christ that had bereft her of consciousness. But Giotto, in the full reality of grief,



TINTORETTO

[San Cassiano, Venice]

never obscured the august character of the Virgin-Mother. The followers of Giotto, imitating the compositions of the master, crowded the scene of Golgotha with figures, so that the pious women and the saints make their way and pray between files of bystanders and ranks of horsemen; angels fly above the pennons, the lances, and the trumpets. Duccio di Boninsegna, at Siena, gathers the people into two groups, to right and left of the cross; and he succeeds in turning all eyes upon Christ; whilst the Virgin has her face towards the cross, the centurion, in a group of Jews, points with an oratorical gesture at the Crucified.

In these crowded compositions it might be possible to distinguish him who carries the sponge on a reed, and him who bears the lance, but they are no longer in contact with Christ. And from the wounded side of the Redeemer flow water and blood that are no longer gathered by the Church, or by Joseph of Arimathæa, or by Adam, though sometimes the weeping angels hold the chalice, whilst others of their company carry the soul of the good thief from his body up to heaven, and demons take possession of that of his impenitent companion. The drama is no longer perfectly clear in all its scenes, as it was in the work of Giotto, in the grand and full compositions of Pietro Lorenzetti at Assisi, of Simone Martini in the cloisters of Santa Maria Novella at Florence, and in other frescoes of that early date. There are some that weep, some that pray, some that discuss, some that fly: groups of horsemen in the strangest attire advance with banners waving to the wind, heralds sound their trumpets, soldiers cast dice for the vesture of the Lord, the holy women mourn, the saints are at their prayers. From the day of Simone Martini to Bernardino Luini the painters



TINTORETTO

[Venice]

present the Crucifixion as the last scene of a great spectacular drama; and this dramatic presentment is in accordance with the mysteries of the

services within the Church, and with the religious theatre set up within the atrium of the palace and on the platform of the public square.



PAOLO VERONESE

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

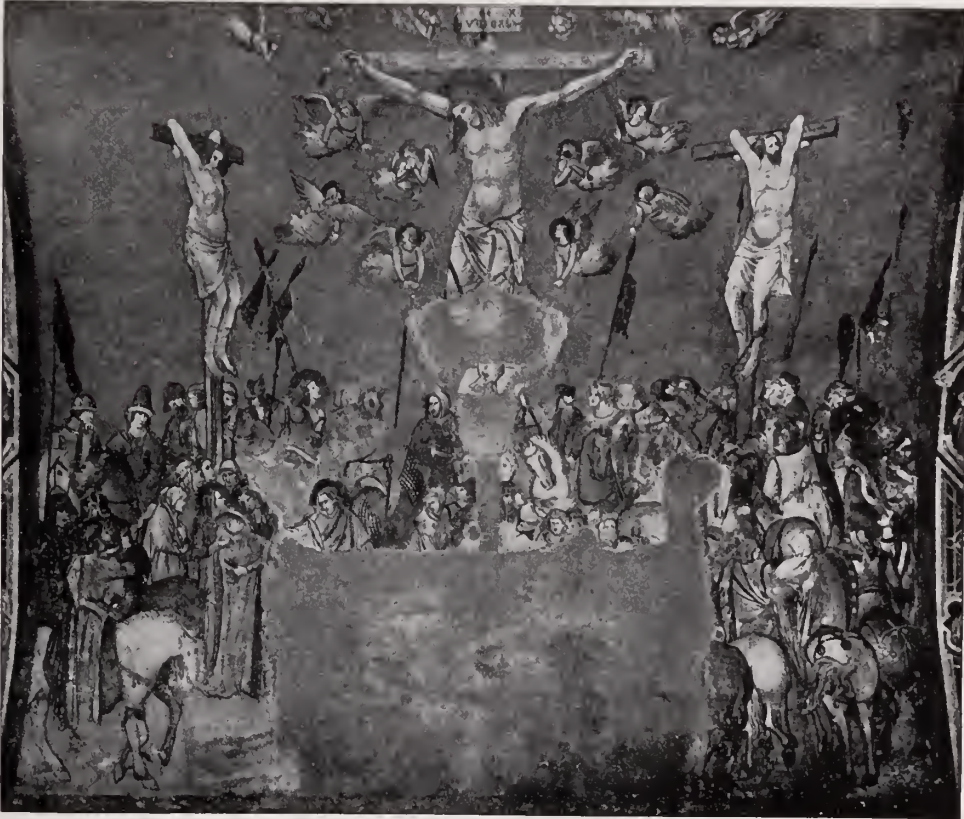
In the fourteenth century we find the representation of the Virgin at the Crucifixion. Now she is seen, as at Santa Maria Novella, in the work of Martini, amongst the holy women, turning her eyes upon the cross and its burden; now she stands in a narrower place with her face convulsed and her head bowed down upon joined hands; now she falls fainting under her grief. In the fifteenth century the sacred drama lacks the energy of Giotto; the voices of the actors seem to lose their power. They raise their clear and gentle eyes under the regular arches of the brow without the intensity of look that interpreted Giotto's thought. They no longer break into gestures of despair; nor do the angels rend their garments, they murmur litanies or mourn under their breath. A sweet devotion fills every soul and speaks in every face. There are no cries, no violent actions, but sighs, prayers to Heaven, and loving touches of the sacred body of Christ, who sleeps, His head sinking amongst its fair tresses. The purely historical treatment disappears when Benozzo Gozzoli, in San Domenico at Pisa, and other masters of the fifteenth century introduce (as spectators of the sacrifice) anchorites, martyrs, Fathers of the Church, founders of religious orders, souls admitted to the gardens of the blessed, with

the accessories intended to represent the life of Paradise—fruits of the tree of mercy, as that life was once symbolised by the deer and the peacock. Thus the drama of Giotto divides into two parts. The choir of saints and friars interrupts with hymns and prayers the mourning of Golgotha, and lifts an unanimous song of gratitude and love. On the other hand, the scene—especially in places far removed from the capital of art, Florence—is presented with every sign of historical actuality. At Bologna great fame attended the fresco of the Crucifixion by Ercole Roberti of Ferrara, at the church of San Pietro, now unfortunately fallen into ruin; on this work Vasari wrote a description in one of the best of his passages:—

“Christ is seen to be already dead, and there is the tumult, exceedingly well expressed, of the Jews who have gathered together to see the Messiah upon the cross; and in this multitude is a wonderful diversity of faces. It is evident that Ercole took infinite pains to make them all unlike one another. And some of them, breaking into sobs and tears, prove how much he sought to imitate the very truth. There is the fainting of the Madonna, which is most piteous; and full of compassion are the Maries in her regard. They are moved with pity, and their aspect is that of ineffable grief, and they mourn for that which they most love and which is dead before their eyes. . . . Amongst other notable persons is Longinus riding a thin horse, and this foreshortened figure has a wonderful relief; in him is to be seen impiety, inasmuch as he had opened the side of Christ, and penitence and conversion, inasmuch as his eyes had been opened. In like manner are to be seen several soldiers who, in various attitudes, cast dice for the raiment of Christ, being themselves curiously attired and having strange faces. Well drawn, and with fine invention, are also the thieves upon their crosses; and as Ercole took great pleasure in foreshortening, which when well understood is a fine thing, he made, in this work, a soldier riding a horse which lifting its forelegs comes forward so as to seem absolutely in relief; and as the wind bends the banner which the man carries in his hand, he has admirable action in keeping it erect. The painter also made a St. John there, who, wrapped in a long sheet, takes flight”

We may find help towards the understanding of this description in a drawing now amongst the drawings and engravings at Berlin; and in Emilia are the works of several followers of Roberti, amongst them a painting in the Galleria Estense at Modena, an early work of Francesco Bianchi-Ferrari. These painters delighted in introducing into their Crucifixions men in arms, fierce warriors, lances, halberds, banners bearing the infernal device of the Scorpion, Jews of almost grotesque aspect and evidently hard of heart, children behind their mothers or carried on their fathers' shoulders, gentle youths intent upon the spectacle, standing on the heights and overlooking what seems somewhat

like a battle-field. During the whole of the fifteenth century we have, moreover, in contrast with these noisy spectacular paintings, those of a more tender and thoughtful character, dwelling upon the graces and beneficences of the Divine sacrifice; and, as in the twelfth-century work of San Clemente, in Rome, we find a cross which is a tree and bears branches telling the history of Christ, with texts and verses of the



CAVALLINI

[Assisi]

Psalms and symbols of the souls of the elect. This contrast continues throughout the fifteenth century. And the contest involves all the forms of composition, and the character given to the representation of Christ. Donatello, it is well known, took infinite pains with the crucifix for Santa Croce, in regard to which Brunellesco reproached him with having "crucified a peasant in the place of Christ, whose body was delicate and perfect in all its members." And the lesson was not lost, for, in his subsequent work at Padua, Donatelli seems to have remembered the crucifix made for Santa Maria Novella by his fastidious critic. Donatello created, in the bas-relief in the National Museum of Florence,

the very image of grief in the form of the Virgin, as she sits at the foot of the cross, in profile, with her hands dropped upon her knees, motionless. Around her are some who weep, others who strike their breasts or their faces, others who raise despairing arms to heaven; above, amongst the clouds, angels are mourning and wailing. She alone, in the foreground, sitting amid fallen warriors, is gathered up and absorbed in her sorrow, which seems to cover her like a garment of woe. She abides, turned to stone, in the midst of sound, movement, and passion.

At the end of the fifteenth century the ideal and the real were reconciled; they mingled like a lovely vine entwining the solid stem of a tree. The composition of the Crucifixion grows simpler, the crowd of Golgotha grows less, and there is room and repose for a quiet grief—tears for the dying Man and reverence for the God. Perugino, in the church of Santa Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi, for example, forgets the foregoing scenes of demonstrative emotion, the violence, the writhing, the vociferous women with faces almost like the faces of furies; he paints a Magdalen composed in prayer, a St. John with drooping arms and hands open as though to invoke his sweet and gentle Master, and a Virgin erect, tranquil in her sorrow.

Thus does the figure of the Virgin re-enter upon the scene of art in that form in which it was conceived in the imagination of St. Ambrose; and over the cross in Perugino's Crucifixions appear again the sun and moon eclipsed. But more important are the composed expression, the quiet attitude, giving to the group a religious solemnity—a sacred silence under the wings of death. Art had learnt to avoid the expression of such violent feeling as contorts, contracts, or in any manner alters the lines and forms of the face; it lifted up a new heart, young, contrite, redeemed by pure love. The very image of the crucifix seemed too gloomy in the day of the immortal youth of Italian art; and, as in the primitive times of the early Christians, it shunned that image. It was only later, in the Anti-Reformation, under the impulse of opposition to Protestantism, that a pale and agonised crucifix was set up to draw the hearts of the people by the appeal of its pallor, its blood, and its convulsion. This, however, was in the decline and fall of art, when the tendency to excessive naturalism had destroyed the truer inspiration. The great days were over, and there was no master to paint the sacrifice of God, and the greatness of the Martyr-Mother.



GIOVANNI DELLA ROBBIA

[Florence

THE DEPOSITION FROM THE CROSS AND THE PIETÀ



THIRTEENTH-CENTURY IVORY

[Milan

BYZANTINE art bestowed upon the person of the "Addolorata," the Mother of Sorrows, a greatness of heroic degree, representing her upon Calvary keeping watch over the body of her Son, and by the sepulchre awaiting His resurrection. She is shown in quest of that disciple who had a new sepulchre in which, at his prayer, was laid the body of the Lord ; and, again, ready to lend her aid in unfastening that body from the cross, receiving the nails into her lap, reaching the burial-cloth to Joseph of Arimathæa, that he might wrap therein the beloved remains, and thus

lay them with honour in the perfumed tomb. A legend preserved by the Abbate Darras relates that she released first the Saviour's right



IVORY

[Ravenna]

hand, and then supported His body whilst Nicodemus drew the nails from the left hand and from the feet. Then she lifted one of those



NICCOLA PISANO

[Cathedral, Lucca]

pierced hands and kissed it, shedding abundant tears. Thus is Mary represented in the twelfth-century and thirteenth-century ivories, for example that of the Museum of Ravenna, and those shown in the historical exhibitions at Milan and Modena. The composition is further



GIOTTO

[Scrovegni Chapel, Padua]

developed in the ivory of the cathedral of Lucca—the work of Niccola Pisano; here Mary and John together lift up the cherished hands of the dead Christ and weep; Joseph of Arimathæa, a noble old man, clasps the sinking body, propping it with his shoulder; Mary presses tenderly on the right hand her sobbing mouth, fixing upon it her widened eyes.

The scene of the Deposition from the Cross soon afterwards lost the impress of the feeling in which it had been conceived in this early art. The designs, aiming at realism, or at least possibility, felt the

difficulty of placing the Virgin on the right of the lofty cross in such a manner as to permit her to support the weight of her Son's inanimate body. The poetry of the group was injured by this attention to the logic of composition. In the great work of Perugino, in the Ancient and Modern Gallery of Florence, we find the Virgin approaching the cross, supported by the holy women, faltering, her knees bent, her whole



GIOTTO (?)

[Assisi]

body sinking, while the disciples of Christ, by means of the ladder and the cloth in strips, sustain the body of Christ released from the nails. Signorelli in the solemn painting of Umbertide, and Begarelli at Modena in his great symmetrical composition, alike represented the fainting of the Virgin at the foot of the cross, in the midst of the holy women encircling her. Begarelli places in the arms of St. John the sacred body of the Lord. But if the Descent from the Cross lost some of its beauty amid the ladders, instruments, and cloths, and the attitudes of many toiling figures, the Pietà, as a subject of art, became sublime.

In the ivory of the Museum at Ravenna we find already, below a



GIOTTINO

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence

Deposition, a group of the Virgin, the disciples, and St. John mourning over the body of the Lord. Mary lifts the head to press her face to it; and all, with an impulse of passionate grief, gather round the lifeless Christ. This mere indication or sketch of a Pietà became the exemplar, and suggested the intensely dramatic composition of Giotto. He painted a Virgin who clasps in her arms the head of her dead Son, seeking some trace of life in the features sealed by death and weeping, as



GIOTTINO (?)

[Santa Croce, Florence]

though a cry of despair must needs escape her. The holy women take the hands of Christ, hold His head and feet, or stand uttering



BEATO ANGELICO

[Florence



DONATELLO

[South Kensington Museum



DONATELLO

[San Lorenzo, Florence



DONATELLO

[San Lorenzo, Florence

cries, the echo of the mourning of mankind. Amid all this tragic consternation we seem to hear one conspicuous voice of lamentation; it is that of St. John, who stops, with backward-stretching arms, as though thunderstruck by the sight of his Master dead. Angels, meanwhile, fly restlessly. The scene has no longer this poignant effect as art grows older. Its pain is more tranquil, the weepers standing or



VERROCCHIO

[Bronze in the Carmelite Church, Venice]



SIGNORELLI

[Santa Croce, Umbertide

kneeling about the body of the Lord have visibly a graver and more reserved devotion. The human is dead, but the Divine lives. Thus it is in the "Pietà" of the so-called Giotto, in the Uffizi at Florence. But the realistic fifteenth century turned again to the ancient ways, forgetting the Gothic elegy. Angelico casts the Virgin's arms about the neck of Christ; she lifts His arms, she touches His feet, as in the work of Giotto; but in the composition of Angelico there reigns the



GIAMBELLINO

[Venice]

silence of the cloister. In the pulpit of the Medicean church in Florence Donatello recalls Giotto; the grief of his "Pietà" breaks forth in violent cries, and touches delirium. The genius of art sounds the deeps of human grief, and casts down before the body of Christ the bodies of the living, as though they themselves were garments of the grave. A fever-fit seizes upon art; and Verrocchio, in his *Ex-voto*, painted for Federigo da Montefeltro, strikes despair into heaven and earth.

A softer spirit rules again with Giovanni della Robbia, Perugino, Francia, and other masters. "Perugino," says Vasari, "laid Christ



PERUGINO

[Florence

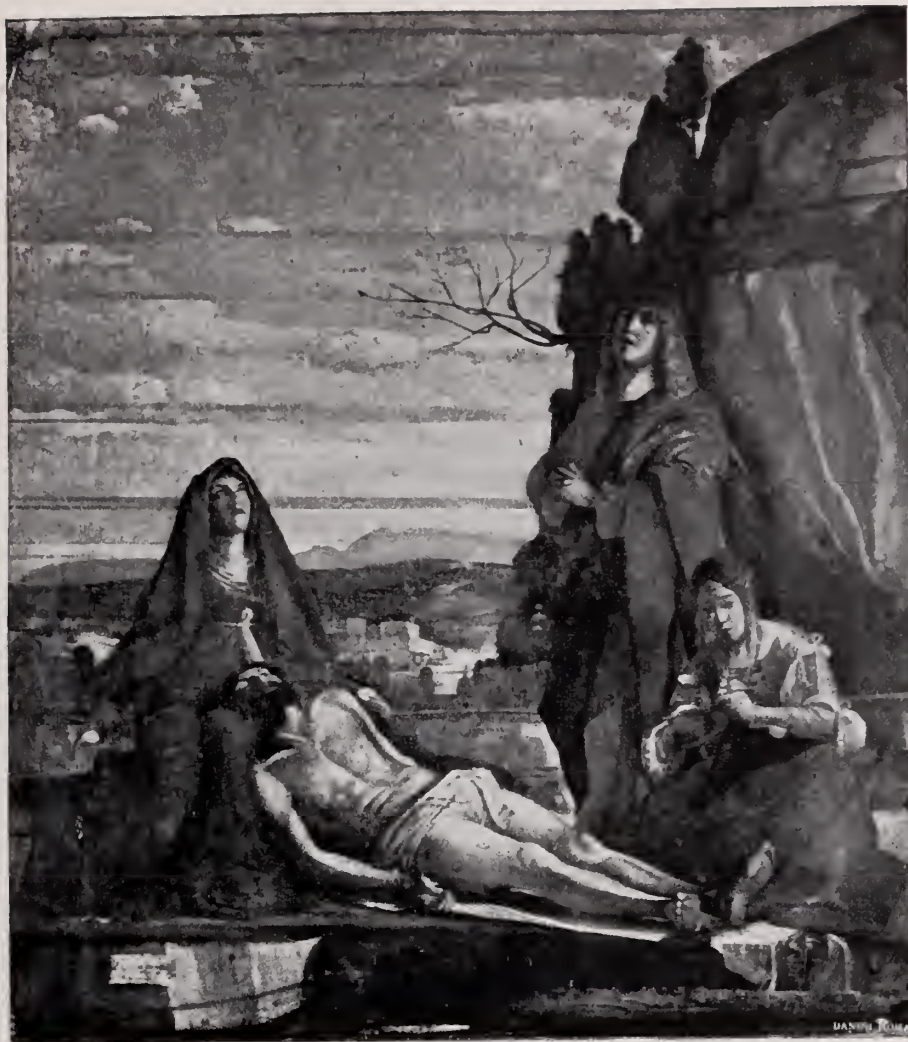
into the lap of our Lady; and four other figures stand thereby, not less well presented than the first, in his manner of designing. And amongst other things he made the dead Christ to be rigid, as though



PERUGINO

[Pitti Gallery, Florence]

He had been so long upon the cross that time and cold had made Him so; and he caused John and the Magdalen to raise Him up while they weep and are afflicted." Tears fall from the red eyes of St. John, of the Virgin, and of the Magdalen. The half-open lips of Mary express her maternal grief; and the hands of the several figures are expressive of the feeling of each—those of Nicodemus being closely



MARESCALCO

[Venice



FRANCIA

[National Gallery, London

shut, those of Mary Magdalen clasped, the right hand of the holy Mother falling, in contrast to the cramped hands of Christ. In another



FRANCIA

[Parma

example, also at Florence, Perugino laboured, as Vasari writes, "to make a Christ, dead, but so well and so freshly coloured that the painters thought it to be indeed a marvel, and most excellent. In this

work are to be seen certain most beautiful heads of old men; and in like manner the Maries, who, pausing in their weeping, look upon the Dead with wonder and with exceeding love. Besides, he made a landscape which was considered most beautiful." This is assuredly



RAPHAEL

[Borghese Gallery, Rome]

a work of Perugino's executed in the full vigour of his artistic power (1495). Hence the fine disposition of the groups, the admirable equilibrium; the force of painful expression in the faces, especially in the face of the Virgin, who fastens with intensity of affection and of compassion her eyes upon the face of the beloved Son; the extreme refinement of design, of colour, of forms represented in all their parts and characters; and the charming beauty of the various and luminous

landscape. But withal there is no violent or tragic action in the figures. Grief does not discompose or scatter the pure lines of beauty. In the



SEBASTIANO DEL PIOMBO

[Viterbo]

“Pietà” of Francia in the National Gallery, London, we see a Christ who appears to be resting, whilst His Mother holds Him upon her knees, without a contraction, without a wrinkle, to disturb the sadness

of her face. An angel upon his knees joins his hands, but his face expresses no agony of prayer ; another angel, facing him, supports the head of Christ, and passes his fingers through the long and drooping hair, turning his own graceful head towards the spectator.

In the sixteenth century Michael Angelo found a more solemn expres-



LUD. BEGARELLI

[Modena

sion of the sorrow of the Mother. Light and transparent shadows fall upon the august brows, upon the closing eyes of the Woman absorbed in the anguish of her heart. Thought and light are put out, for her ; one hand half open, half held forth to express desolation, follows the interior movement of a soul deprived of its sole good, and overwhelmed by the sacrifice of Christ. The closed mouth utters nothing, hardly is the vesture stirred by the pain of a heart beating within the prison of

the body. The noble and courageous Mother feels the very cause of life fail within her with the life of her Son; none the less does she feel the mystery of the redemption of mankind, and the fulfilment of the prophecies and of the will of God. With a Michelangiolesque greatness, but also with a vivid Venetian sense of realities, Sebastiano del Piombo represented, in the twilight, amid the shadows that cover the earth, a Mother less noble than ennobled by her grief, praying in the presence of her dead Son, alone with the sorrow that is over all



LUD. BEGARELLI

[Modena

things. In the group by Begarelli, at San Pietro, Modena, Mary prays, St. John tenderly bearing her company and supporting her. The

composition of the "Pietà" becomes more restricted and more sculptural in the sixteenth century. The artist is content with the two



TINTORETTO

[Pitti Gallery, Florence]

figures—the dead Christ on the knees of the Virgin. In the fourth picture by Sodoma in the Borghese Gallery, the background is cold, gloomy, set with thorny trees stripped of their leaves, illuminated by a white light from beyond the rocks of Calvary, which stand dark and contorted like creatures having, or having had, some kind of tormented life. In time Italian art, as it becomes more actual and more logical, will not leave the heavy body of the Dead across the weak knees of the woman. Buonconsigli preserves the traditional idea of laying the head of Christ in the lap of Mary. She opens her desolate arms, and her head rises against a reddened sky.

In Venice, however, where, in the sixteenth century, painting was not subject to the laws and spirit of sculpture, and did not seek for shape and relief, there is a continuance of the old and more complex

composition, from the time of Cima da Conegliano to that of Tintoretto. Both these painters showed the Virgin falling back into the arms of the holy women, whilst her face is veiled with the shadow of death. But Titian, before he closed his eyes that had followed and watched the flight of the ideals of art throughout the great age, painted the



TITIAN AND HIS PUPILS

[Venice]

sacred scene in a spirit of inimitable grandeur, placing the actors in shadow, before a recess into which shine the gleams of torches. We seem to feel the shaking of the earth under the melancholy figures disposed in transverse line; the feet of the Magdalen fail her as she stands. The holy Mother with her hand outstretched lifts up the head of Christ; she looks at Him in silence. In the shadow, upon pedestals with lions' heads, on either side of the marble niche, stand

the prophet Moses with the tables of the Law, and the allegorical Faith, crowned and pointing to the cross. The Pietà is thus between the Law of Moses and that of Christ, between the Old Testament and the New, between the tables of Sinai and the Rood. Mary does not weep; conscious of the Sacrifice of her Son, she looks on His face once more, and the greatness of the Saint and Martyr rules all her action, her look, and her face. Titian composes his picture as though



FRAGMENT OF ROMAN SARCOPHAGUS

[Vatican Museum]

before his death, at ninety-nine years of age, he was to raise up the sepulchre of Christ.

Another scene, often called the "Deposition from the Cross" or the "Pietà," is more properly the carrying of the body of Christ to the grave. As a subject of painting this seems to have taken form in the fifteenth century, after the revived study of the Antique, and in particular of the sarcophagus sculpture of the death of Meleager. In his representation of the laying of Christ in the sepulchre, Donatello certainly took his inspiration from these antique figures that bear away the dead Meleager after the hunting of the Caledonian boar, as, at the end of the fourth century, the carver of the ivory at Brescia, showing the dead Ananias carried out of the presence of St. Peter, imitated the composition of the same ancient marbles. Raphael in his picture painted for Atalanta Baglioni had (perhaps with some reference to her name) something of the same idea. This work, destined for San

Francesco at Perugia, is considered by Italian critics to be the representative picture of the age of highest civilisation, purity of taste, and nobility of feeling. Amongst the luminous colours the dead Christ seems to close His eyes to the light and to sink deeply into sleep in the arms of His faithful ones; but more admirable still is the group of the gentle and pitiful women whose arms receive the fainting Virgin as she falls like a lily under the scythe.

The laying of the dead Christ in the tomb is the last scene of the long series, for so many ages dear to art. The rigid body is laid upon the bier, the holy women rend their hair and their garments as they weep, the Mother embraces and kisses the Dead. Together they would delay the moment when they shall see Him no more. Thus does one follower of Giotto depict, at Assisi, that mournful scene, and—more gently—another in Santa Croce at Florence. The fifteenth century in general showed the dead Christ erect, lifted up within the sepulchre by the hands of Mary and of John. And amongst many examples of this simple composition is one that seems worthy of particular mention; it is by Giambellino, and is to be seen in the vestibule of the little church of the ducal palace. Here the head of Christ leans upon the Virgin's cheek, and the half-closed lips of both seem to exchange a sigh. But thus the scene ceases to be natural or actual, and the group of the Saviour upright in the tomb, Mary, and John becomes purely symbolical. The Redeemer manifests Himself once more to the people; albeit with closed eyes, crowned with thorns, changed in colour, and full of wounds. He has yielded up His life; but Mary and John lift Him up in His sepulchre, so that the world may see and worship Him.

THE ASCENSION



SACRAMENTARIUM OF DROGON

[National Library, Paris

CHRIST'S Figure in Glory is found amongst the bas-reliefs on the right of the doorway of the basilica of Santa Sabina in Rome—fifth-century work. The Giver of the New Law, clad in the pallium, stands upon the world within a shield surrounded by laurel. He holds, almost as though it were a lyre, the Scroll, bearing, in Greek letters, His Name, and extends the other hand in blessing over the creation. The alpha and omega, cut at the sides of the figure, designate this the Christ

of the Apocalypse, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Within the intersecting triangles formed by the medallion with the rectangular division are cut the symbols of the Evangelists; and beneath the vault of the heavens (where the sun, moon, and stars shine forth) stand two apostles, Peter and Paul, holding aloft a cruciform crown, and with them a woman—the Church left for a witness in the world, and contemplating the glory of her victorious Lord.

This is the earliest representation in art of the triumph of the Saviour after Calvary and the sepulchre. Mary, who in the beginnings of Christian design appears in figure as the Church, the mother of the faithful, soon after takes her own personal aspect as the human Mother of God. We find her thus in the Syriac codex of the monk Rabula in the Laurentian Library at Florence. Here the angels point out the

Christ to the company of the Apostles, as He stands within an aureole held up by cherubs; the symbols of the four Evangelists are covered



FIFTH-CENTURY DOOR

[Santa Sabina, Rome]

over by the wings of the Angel; upon the tops of mountains turn the wheels of thrones, and two winged spirits receive into their veiled hands the crown of Christ the Victor. Mary in the guise of the *orante*, the praying figure of the Catacombs, lifts up and opens her



IVORY

[Barberini Library, Rome

arms; but the nimbus crowns her, and she wears the mantle that covers her in the manner of a veil, like a Byzantine Madonna.

The Resurrection is not, of course, a scene wherein the Virgin takes part, but she is foremost in the Ascension. And the composition of



CODEx OF RABULA THE MONK

Florence

this subject in art takes definite form, we find, in the sixth century. It is clear in the Sacramentarium of Drogon, in an ivory in the Barberini Library (ninth century), and, with some few variants, throughout the Byzantine age; we may take as an example the frontispiece of James the Monk and the ivory of the Carrano Collection at Florence (late eleventh century), which has the inscription: "Men of Galilee, why stand ye looking up into heaven?"



TWELFTH-CENTURY IVORY

[Rome



BEATO ANGELICO

[Florence



GIOTTO

[Scrovegni Chapel, Padua]



TADDEO GADDI (?)

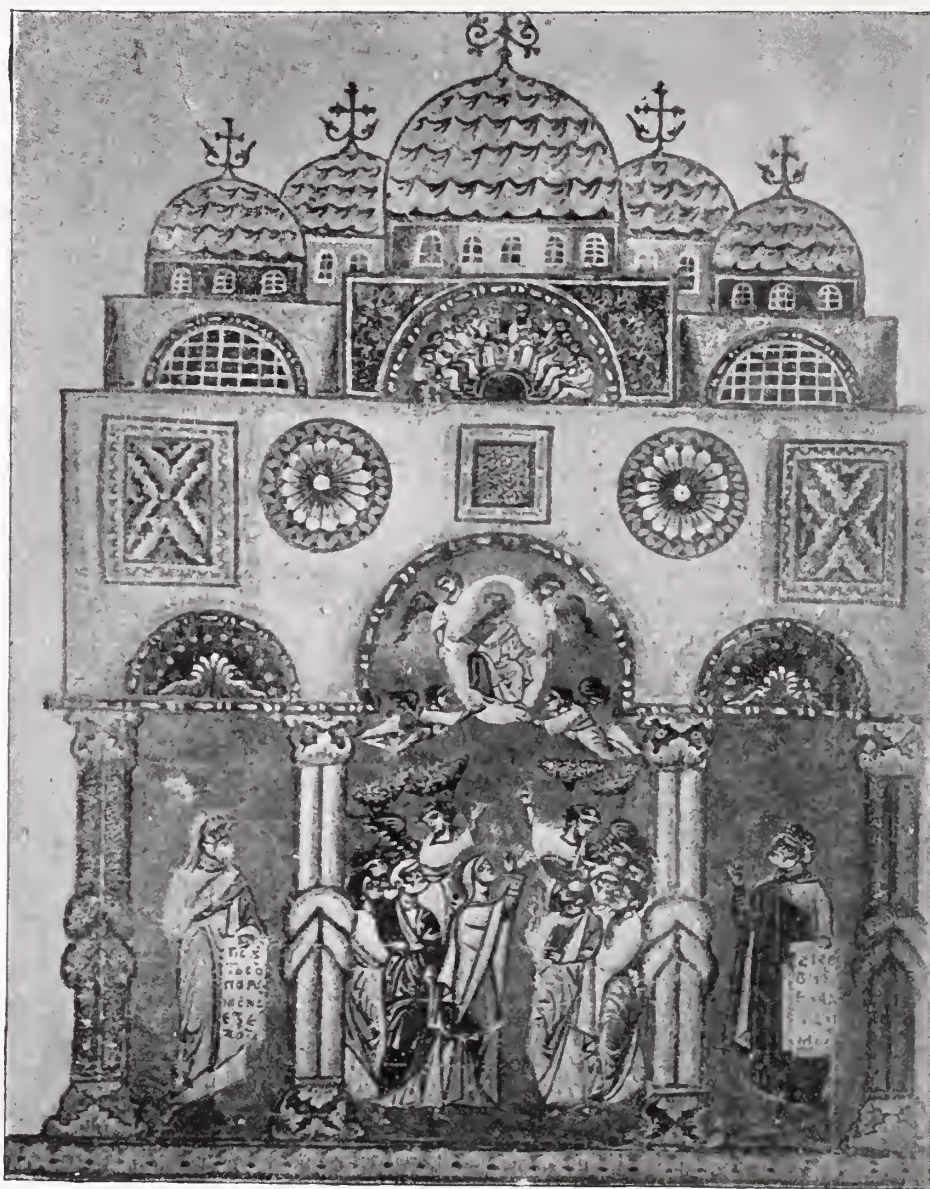
[Santa Maria Novella, Florence]



DONATELLO

[San Lorenzo, Florence

Italian art, albeit preserving the ancient elements of the scene, brought it to perfection in the fourteenth century. Christ rises as though He had sprung upward from the earth He leaves, as in the



HOMILIES OF JAMES THE MONK

[National Library, Paris]

Sacramentarium of Drogon; the two Angels point out the vision to the Apostles, as in the Syriac codex; and the group of men of Galilee, on their knees, shade their eyes with their hands as they gaze into the light; Mary prays with clasped hands. Thus with Giotto in the Arena Chapel at Padua. Nor do we find any different reading in the



MANTEGNA

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

symmetrical composition of Taddeo Gaddi (?) in the Spanish Chapel at Florence. Beato Angelico later on represented the scene of the Ascension, with a beautiful range of mountains stretched upon the horizon, and kept the two Angels and even the two olive-trees which we saw but now in the ancient ivory, and which are usually present in Byzantine design; but the circle, the crown, of entranced Apostles who watch the disappearance of their Lord in the sunset clouds and



BYZANTINE IVORY

[Museum, Florence]

in a halo of light, have not here the life, the emotion, that Giotto gives them. Nor does Giovanni da Fiesole express, in the figure of Mary, Giotto's tender love and joy. But Montegna himself does not reach Giotto's feeling in the "Ascension" of the Uffizi—the well-calculated picture in which Mary has the attitude of an early *orante*. An admirable work is this, and executed with the precision of an antique cameo; but the emotion does not well up with the freshness and fulness of Giotto. It has perhaps too manifest a scenic forethought and preparation.

PENTECOST



SACRAMENTARIUM OF DROGON

[National Library, Paris]

DEALING with the great mystery of Pentecost, we see in the Syriac codex of the monk Rabula, the Virgin in the midst of the Apostles, all standing, and in a kind of triumphal choir, whilst in the nimbus which each one wears shines the flame of the Holy Spirit, Who, in the form of a Dove with shining beak, seems about to alight upon the Virgin's head. In the Sacramentarium of Drogon, and in the ivory of the Barberini Library, the rays are represented as long lances striking

the heads of the seated Apostles, and Mary is not in the concourse, as she is absent also, much later, in Giotto's Paduan fresco. Taddeo Gaddi, however, resumes the old tradition, re-interprets the text of Scripture, multiplies the followers of Christ gathered about the Virgin, and brings to the doors of the house in which the Mother of the Lord and His disciples are at prayer—half of them to the right and half to the left of Mary—the pilgrims from far countries who were to share in the mystery and the visitation. Mary, in aspect like a devout nun intent at prayer, lifts her absorbed eyes to Heaven. The sacred text was read aright by the learned painter of the Spaniards' Chapel; but art did not take with him the long stride made with Beato Angelico, who painted several times the scene of Pentecost. The sixteenth century, with Titian at Venice (in the church of the Salute), and with



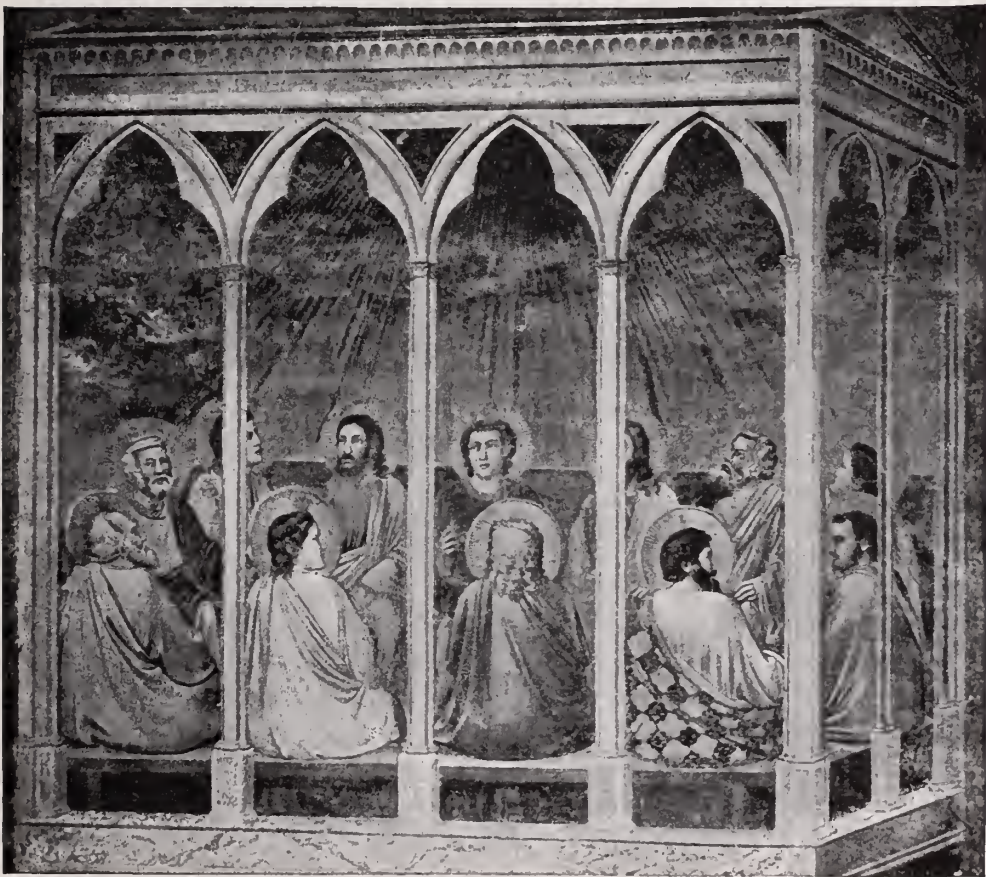
IVORY

[Barberini Library, Rome



BEATO ANGELICO

[Florence



GIOTTO

[Scrovegni Chapel, Padua



TADDEO GADDI (?)

[Santa Maria Novella, Florence



DONATELLO

[San Lorenzo, Florence



PARIS BORDONE

[Brera Gallery, Milan

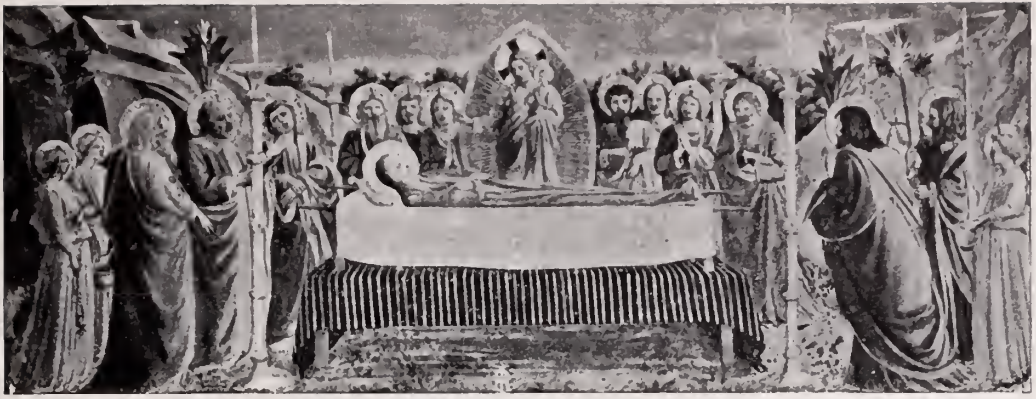
Paris Bordone at Milan (in the Brera picture), found a way to image the actual and spiritual scene, with the fervent Apostles united to one another by their love of God, and in the midst of them the presiding



CODEx OF THE MONK RABULA

[Laurentian Library, Florence]

Virgin with the outstretched arms of the *orante* and with a spirit rapt towards Heaven. The light falls direct upon this elect amongst women, and is diffused on the heads of her august companions. She seems to rise to the heights and the very source of light.



BEATO ANGELICO

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence

THE ASSUMPTION



LIBERALE DA VERONA

[Cathedral Library, Siena

EARLY monuments of the Christian religion show us no representation of the Assumption of the Virgin into the glories of Heaven ; and when certain writers of the Church then spoke of the Assumption of the Mother of God they seemed to mean no more than the relinquishment of earthly life and the attainment of life eternal. In the first centuries Mary was the abstract symbol of the woman foretold by the Prophet Isaiah, the most pure virgin who was to.

become the Mother of the Lord ; and the indeterminate idea was not to be reduced to personal form. But the Gnostic sectaries of the third and



ILLUMINATION (TWELFTH CENTURY)

[School of Salzburg]

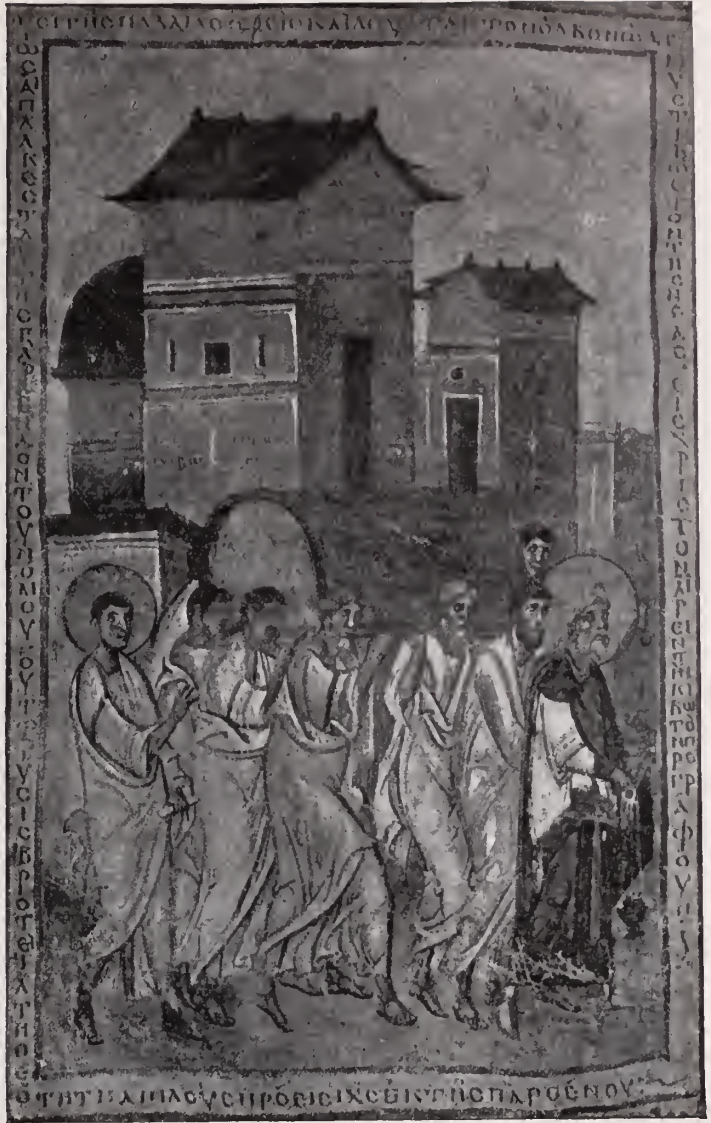
fourth centuries attempted to attribute human affections to the venerable Virgin, and composed that poetic story of her Passing which was disapproved and condemned by Pope Gelasius at the end of the fifth century. Although the Gnostic legend was well known, the Christians of the early centuries were loth to adopt it; their tendency was to leave a reverent veil over unrevealed incidents, and to confine themselves to the story of the Gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles. Thus we can hardly take the sculptures of

the ancient sarcophagus of Saragossa as representing the Assumption. What is clear is merely that it shows the Divine hand put forth from Heaven to grasp the arm of a praying female figure, stationed between St. Peter and St. Paul.

It was not until the sixth and seventh centuries that the tradition of the Passing was widely entertained by the conscience of the Christian congregation, and that the history of it was attributed to orthodox writers, was echoed in choir and in pulpit—even in the sermons of Bishops—and was ascribed by some to St. John the Evangelist,

while others assigned it to a Bishop of the time of Marcus Aurelius.

One day (so ran the tradition) when the Virgin was in tears because of her desire to see again her Divine Son, an Angel appeared to her in a bright light and presented to her a branch of palm, so that it might be carried before her bier when, three days later, the solemn event of her death should have come to pass. Mary then desired that the Apostles should be near her and should bury her; and she prayed that her soul when it left her body should meet with no malignant spirit. The Angel said to her: "He who from Judæa was



TWELFTH-CENTURY ILLUMINATION

[Vatican Library]

able to carry the prophet by the hair of his head into Babylon is able now to gather unto thee the Apostles scattered amongst the nations of the earth; and thou shalt not fear any malignant spirit, for thou hast bruised his head and overset his throne." Having said this, the Angel returned into Heaven with the shining light; and the palm which he had left behind him upon earth shone with light. It was green like the branch of a natural tree, but its leaves sparkled like the morning star. Mary then lay down upon her bed, making ready for her burial. In the meantime, as John was preaching at Ephesus, suddenly it thundered out of Heaven, and a white cloud covered the

Evangelist and carried him before the house of Mary. He knocked upon the door, entered in, and greeted his Mother, who wept with joy



MOSAIC OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

[Palermo]

to see him, reminding him of the word spoken upon the Cross by his Master when He entrusted her to His friend. And she committed to his care her earthly remains, so that the Jews should not—as they had



IVORY

[Ravenna

plotted—carry away and cast into the flames the body that had conceived Christ. At the same hour the thunder sounded, and all the Apostles, carried in like manner in clouds from the places where they were then preaching, entered into the house of Mary. John told them then that the Virgin was near to her death, and, staunching his own



MOSAIC OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

[Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome]

tears, enjoined upon them that they should not weep, and that the people should not be alarmed. When Mary saw that all the Apostles were gathered together, she gave thanks to God and blessed Him. She made them sit down amongst the lighted lamps, she showed them the shining palm, and she stretched herself on her bed, awaiting death. Peter stood at her head, John at her feet, and the other Apostles round about, uttering the praises of the Virgin. When it was about the third hour of night, thunder struck the house until it shook; and

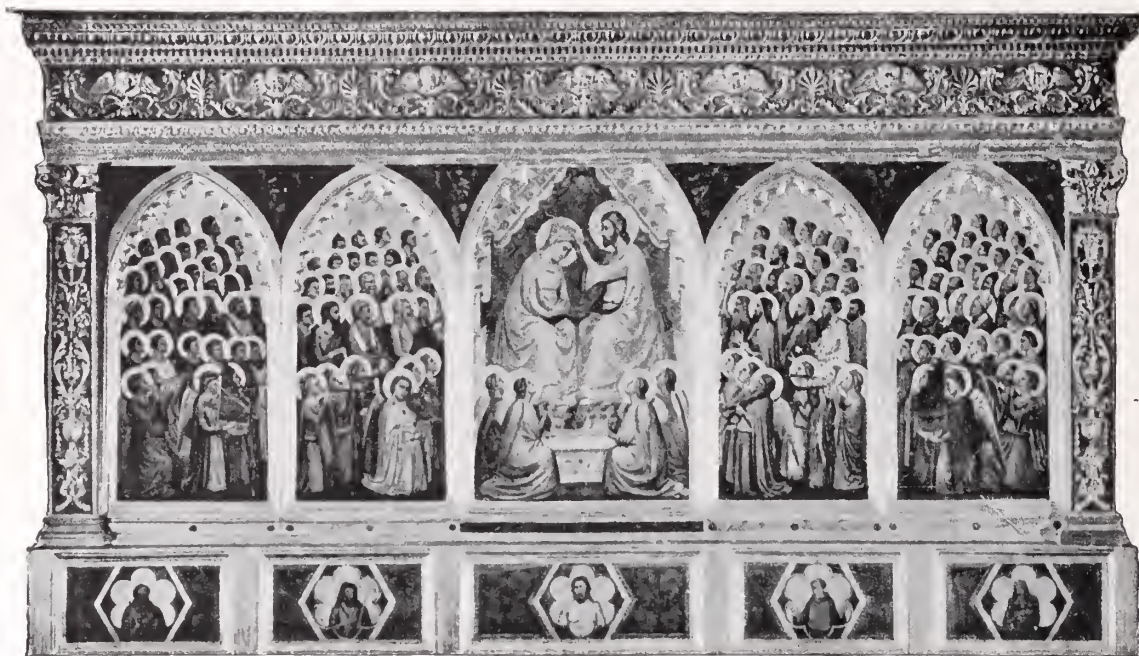
thereupon the chamber was filled with a perfume so sweet that many were faint and overcome with sleep. . . . Then did Christ enter with



GUGLIELMO DA PISA

[San Giovanni]

the Angels, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Martyrs, the Confessors, and the choir of Virgins. All drew near, singing, to the bed of Mary. Christ then said to His Mother, "Come, thou chosen amongst all



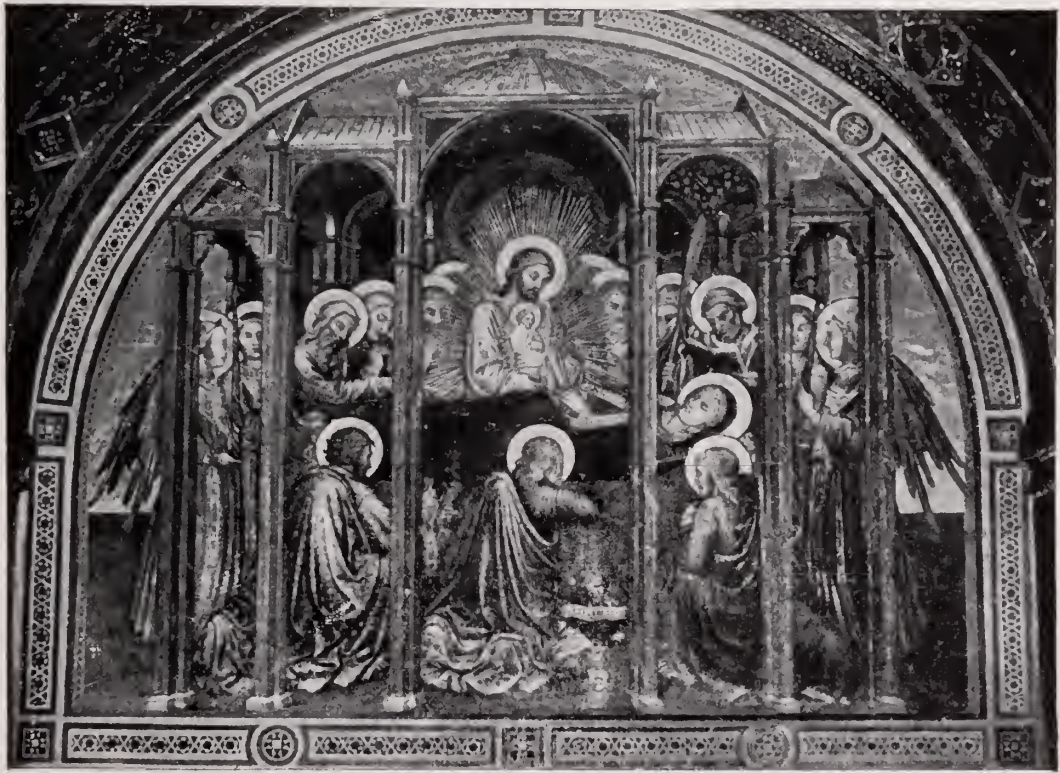
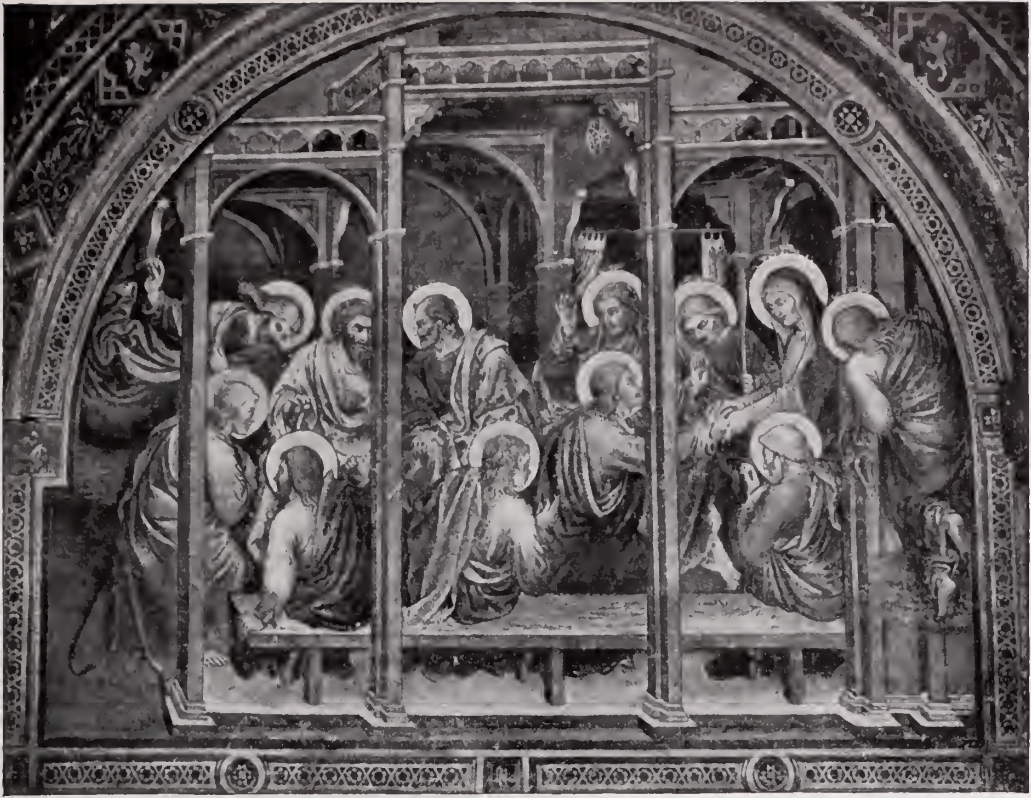
GIOTTO

[Santa Croce, Florence



GIO. FRANCESCO D'AREZZO AND BETTO DI FRANCESCO DA FIRENZE

[Cathedral, Arezzo



TADDEO DI BARTOLO

[Siena

women, and I will set thee on My throne." "Lord," answered Mary, "my heart is ready." Then all those who came with Christ sang sweetly; and Mary also sang, "All generations shall call me blessed, for He that is mighty hath done great things to me." And Christ spoke this word: "My beloved, come from Lebanon and receive thy crown."



TADDEO DI BARTOLO

[Siena]

"Here am I," said Mary, "for Thou art all my joy." In the same hour the soul of the Virgin went forth from her body without pain, and flew into the arms of her Son. He bade the Apostles bear the body of His Mother into the Valley of Jehoshaphat and abide there three days until He should come thither. Soon the roses and lilies of the valley—that is to say, the celestial and blessed spirits—gathered round about the Virgin's soul, which was whiter than milk and which Christ carried in His arms; and with it they all went up into Heaven, while the Apostles prayed from the earth that she would not forget them.

Now the saints who had remained in Heaven, hearing the singing of those who were coming back from earth, and seeing their King with the soul of a woman in His arms, inquired of one another, "Who is she that cometh up from the desert, full of grace, leaning upon her Beloved?" "This," replied the company of the Virgin, "is the fairest

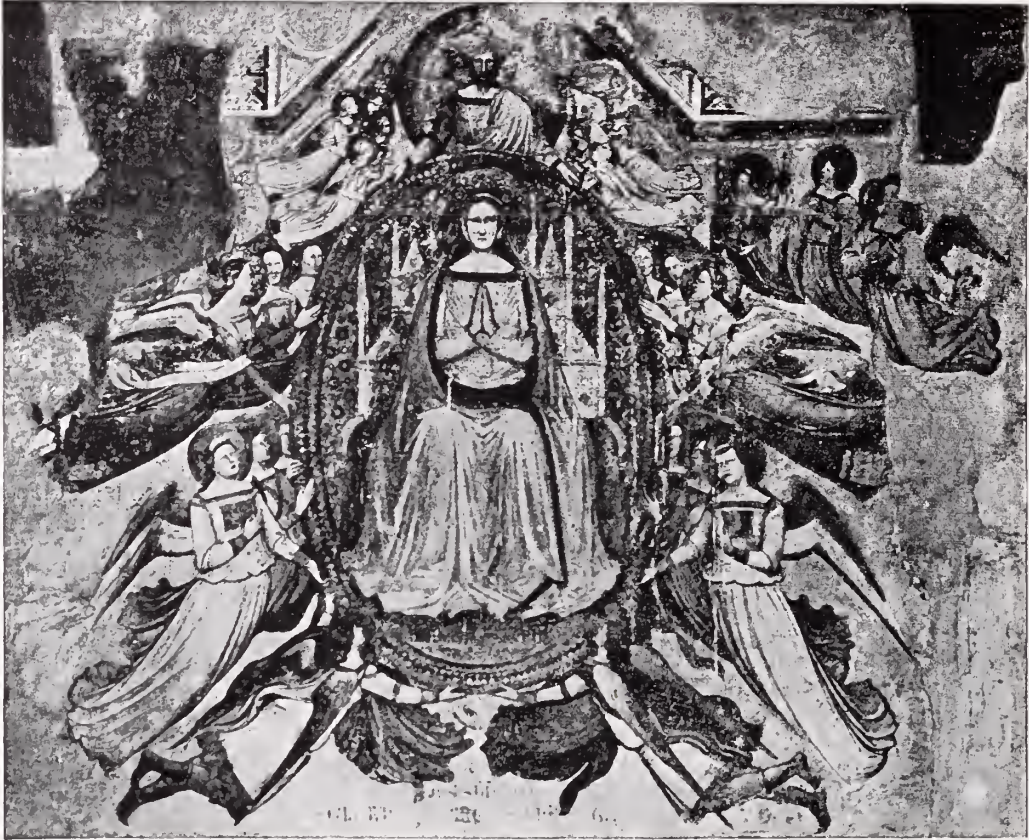


TADDEO DI BARTOLO

[Siena

amongst the daughters of Jerusalem. And as you have aforetime beheld her full of charity and love, behold her now upon the throne of glory at the right hand of her Son." In the meanwhile, down upon earth, did those awake who had been overcome with sleep at the bedside of the Virgin, and break forth into weeping and lamentation because they saw that her body was dead. Three damsels put forth their hands to lift up the body, which then gave forth so bright a light that they were able to touch but not to look upon it. They wrapped it in grave-clothes, and the Apostles laid it upon a bier. John

took the shining palm, Peter and Paul carried the bier upon their shoulders, and they went forth singing in a low voice. God covered



SIMONE MEMMI

[Campo Santo, Pisa]

them over with a cloud, so that those who passed by heard their singing but did not see who it was who sang; and the Angels in a great multitude, two by two, accompanied the singing of the Apostles, and upon the earth was heard their sweet sound of harmony. All the people that were in Jerusalem heard the same; but, when they heard that the disciples of Christ were carrying His Mother to the sepulchre, they ran to take arms that they might slay them and might cast into the fire the body of her who had borne the Saviour. The high priest of the Hebrews laid his hands upon the bier to throw it down, but his arms immediately withered away, and the people were struck blind by the Angels. Then the high priest repented, and his arms were healed. And taking the palm-branch which Peter gave him he touched therewith the people who were blind, and the light came again to their

eyes. And when the Apostles had come to the valley, they laid the body of the Virgin in the sepulchre, and kneeling down they prayed and sang a hymn. On the third day a bright cloud was round about the sepulchre, a sweet odour was shed abroad, voices from Heaven were heard, and Christ, coming to earth with a great company of Angels, saluted His disciples and said to them, "Peace be with you." They



ORCAGNA

[Or' San Michele, Florence]



GIACOMO AND PIER PAOLO DI VENEZIA

[San Francesco, Bologna]



JACOPO AVANZI

[San Michele, Padua

answered Him, "Glory be to Thee." Then came St. Michael and brought to the Lord the soul of Mary, which was restored to her



LORENZO MONACO

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence

body, and with that body came forth from the sepulchre, and rose up amongst the angels into Heaven, where the Son received her, and embraced her, and clothed her with light.



GERINI

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence

Such, in its chief points, is the legend that gathered first in the East, and was afterwards illustrated in all its principal incidents by

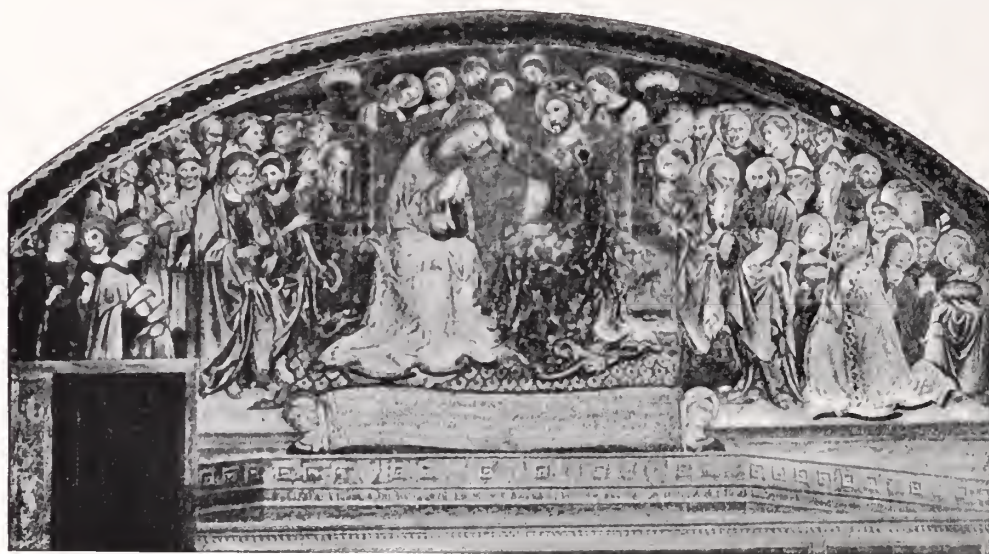


SPINELLO ARETINO

[Siena]

Greek artists, to become later still the inspiration of many works of mediæval art.

While the Iconoclastic sedition was raging, in the eighth century, St. Adrian gave to the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, an altar-cloth of gold tissue, adorned with jewels, upon which was em-



SANO DI PIETRO

[Siena]

broidered the image of the Assumption. So says Anastasius in the *Liber Pontificalis*, wherein moreover we read the description of a

paludament bearing the story of the Passing of the Virgin, a work of the time of Leo III.; and wherein we have also the record of a sacred vestment of the time of Paschal I. (807-823) that bore the image of the Assumption of the body of Mary. Of these—probably the work of Greek artists, fugitives from Byzantium—no trace remains.

We must come down to the time of Leo IV., when the festival of the Assumption was celebrated throughout the West according to the directions of Charlemagne and of his son, in order to find a representation of the Madonna "assumed." It was a Bishop of Charlemagne's reign who—being interrogated on the subject of the Assumption—sent to him a treatise, attributed afterwards to St. Augustine, in which the writer describes Mary in the Kingdom of Heaven, amongst the choirs of virgins that follow her, through ranks of lilies and roses, to the fountains of eternal life, walking upon golden meadows, gathering violets that cannot fade. Adorned with gems and pearls she sits upon the throne prepared for her by the angels in the courts of the Eternal.



TADDEO DI BARTOLO

[Siena

In 847 the Pope added an octave to the feast of the Assumption; and by this time the form of the scene of that mystery, in art, had changed greatly from the custom of the Greek artists. These had signified the Assumption of the Virgin by sleep, rest, transmigration, or passing, and they showed her with closed eyes laid at length upon

her funeral bed. In the West, it was rather the resurrection that filled the artist's thought, as in the East it had been the death. In order to explain the return of the Virgin to life, the reunion of body and spirit, the Western artists borrowed the forms that had served them in representing the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ. We see this



TADDEO DI BARTOLO

[Siena

fully in the Syriac Bible of the monk Rabula, in the Laurentian Library at Florence, and in the frescoes of the lower basilica of San Clemente, Rome. The simplicity of the scene was to be somewhat affected in time through the influence of Byzantine art. In three ivories—one in the Museum of Ravenna, the second in the Royal Library of Monaco, the third at Darmstadt—as also in the illuminations of an *evangelarium* in the church at Devenser, and of a MS. in the Paris National Library, all works of about the tenth century, we find the Byzantine composition full and precise.

The Virgin lies upon her curved bed with her arms

folded on her bosom, deep in sleep; about her are gathered a multitude of the disciples, some of whom have their hands to their faces as though to hide them, according to the classic manner of indicating grief. The Saviour, standing, takes the soul of His Mother under the figure of a little girl-child, and raises it towards two angels, who with hands covered in their mantles make haste devoutly to receive it. Thus is the scene portrayed in the mosaics of the Martorana at Palermo. This manner of representing the soul as a babe in swaddling-clothes was by

no means a novelty. The Greeks had given an infantine form to souls separated from the body; as may be seen in the bas-reliefs of the



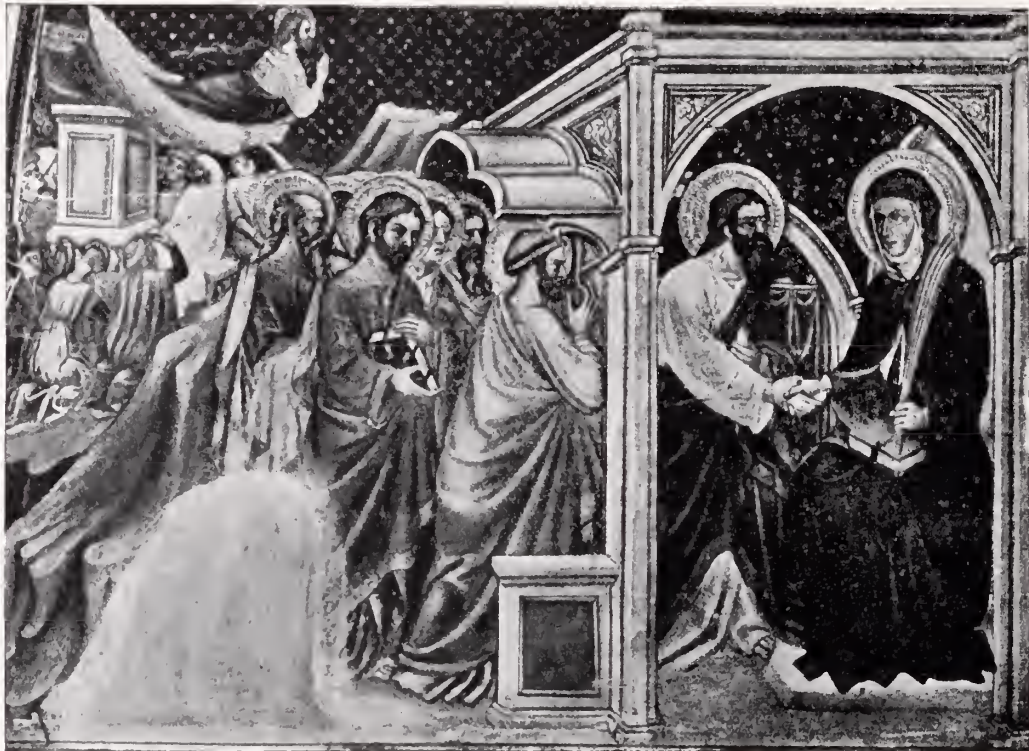
OTTAVIANO NELLI

[Foligno

monument of Xanthus—of high antiquity—where the dead, in the shape of little children, are carried away by the harpies.

The bed of death was soon exchanged for the sarcophagus with a lifted lid, as in the Byzantine doorway of San Paolo Outside the Walls,

of the eleventh century; and an attempt was made to add some incident of the ascension of the Prophet Elias, the canons of the school of painting of Mount Athos directing that in representations of the Assumption the Virgin should be shown in the act of giving her girdle to the Apostle St. Thomas. As Elias threw his mantle to Eliseus, so Mary, triumphant like him over death, gives her girdle to St. Thomas in sign of her own resurrection. The legend relates that



OTTAVIANO NELLI

[Foligno

this Apostle, having come from a further country than the others, had arrived too late to be present at the death of Mary; he desired to look upon her once more, and the sepulchre was opened. But no body lay therein—only the perfumed cloths that had wrapped it. Then the Apostles judged that the Virgin had risen again, and Thomas gave them a proof that it was so, telling them that the august Lady had appeared to him, and showing them the girdle received from her hands as a sign of the reality of the vision. The artists of the West gave heed to all these traditions, rather for the glory of the Virgin than out of respect to pious and popular legend.



OTTAVIANO NELLI

[Foligno



OTTAVIANO NELLI

[Foligno



OTTAVIANO NELLI

[Gubbio



GENTILE DA FABRIANO

[Brera Gallery, Milan

The coronation of the Virgin begins in the twelfth century to be a subject of Christian art. From that time it often takes the place of the Assumption. Not only do the humble disciples look upon the uprising of the humble daughter of Nazareth; the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the

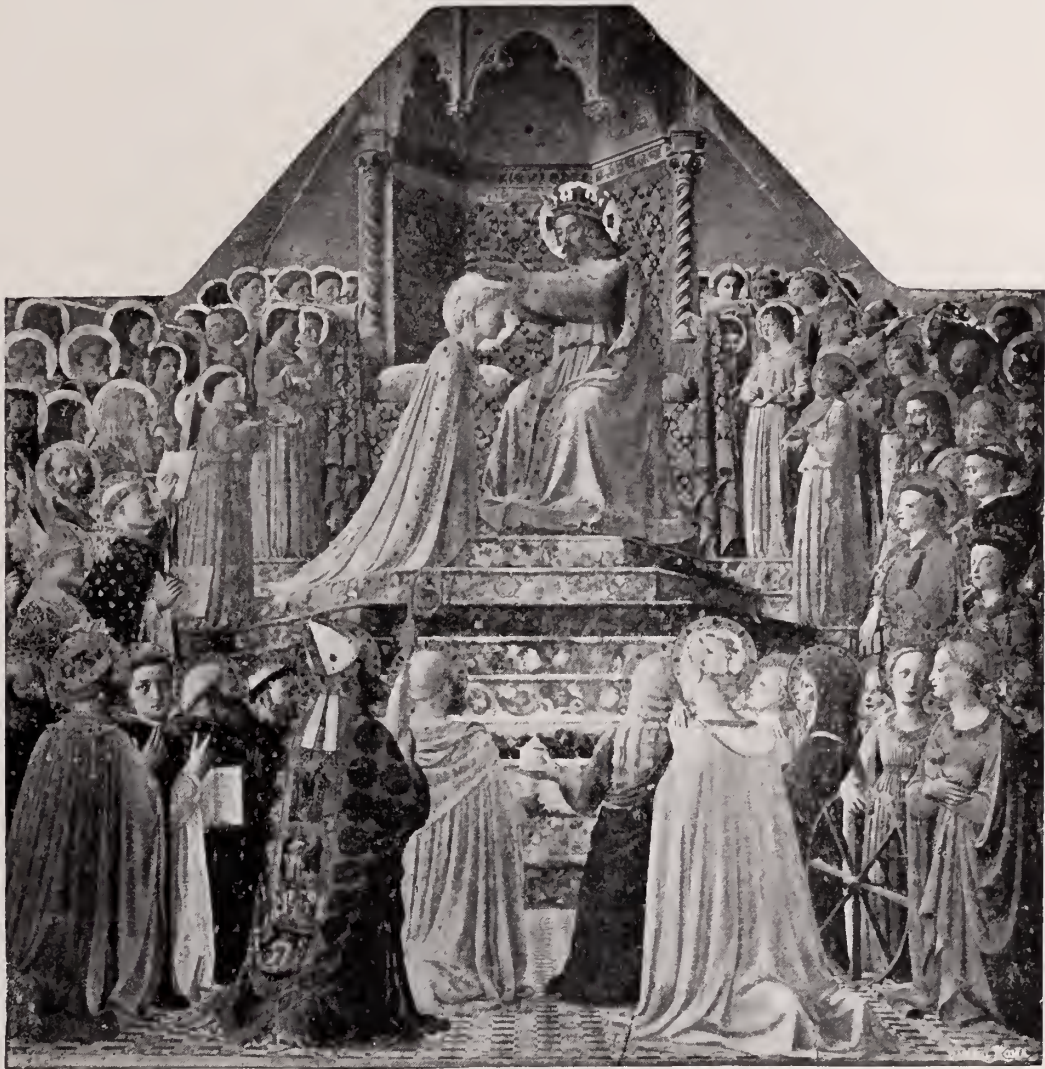


BEATO ANGELICO

[Uffizi Gallery, Florence]

whole company of the Blessed are present. We find, for example, in the great composition in the narthex of the abbatial church of Vezzolano, near Albagnano d'Asti, the representation, in an upper fillet to the left, of Mary laid in the sepulchre and surrounded by the weeping Apostles. To the right is the Virgin carried up to Heaven by angels whilst others offer incense; in the midst the Saviour, with His Mother crowned upon

her throne. In the lower fillet the Patriarchs and Prophets in a long line bear witness to the triumph of the Virgin, holding their scrolls, some meditating with their heads upon their hands, some discussing with one another, others looking out into the distance. The artist, probably of



BEATO ANGELICO

[Louvre

the beginning of the thirteenth century, has given to these figures their essential characteristics, with a new spontaneity of feeling and a wide variety of action; the Byzantine incident of the soul in the figure of a child is absent. The Virgin is seated in glory—with the lily-sceptre in her hand and on her head the chaplet of a queen—on the right hand of the King of the Heavens, whilst the Biblical Patriarchs and crowned

Prophets assemble, remembering their prophecies and their visions. As in the Homilies of James the Monk, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, we behold the Prophets as they gaze upon the Virgin enthroned with her Son, so the thirteenth-century sculptor gathers to the feet of the Virgin the court of Prophets who seem to hear the word written by the Byzantine monk at the head of his Homilies: "Of this great and joyful



LUCA DELLA ROBBIA

[Ognissanti, Florence]

feast all partake. The generations followed one another, the prophecies went forth into all lands, the Patriarchs and all just men lived in hope. Abraham passed away, and after him his children's children sighed for the things that should come to pass, being known to them. Moses, casting his eyes upon these mysteries and considering the signs of the truth, thought that the prophecies should be fulfilled in his own days; then did hope pant in the desert, and the fathers of the people were in expectation. Samuel received signs of that which should come to pass. David ceased not to proclaim that the day was near. The Prophets announced together that Christ was at the doors. But all passed away without seeing the fulfilment of their hope." The miniature-painter of the Homilies disposes his figures in two parts, and causes his Prophets to turn their faces upwards from amongst the ranks of flowering plants; the thirteenth-century sculptor gathers them together in a tribune up



MASOLINO

[Gallery at Naples

in Heaven as principal attendants upon the throne of their King. The Virgin appears crowned, as at Santa Maria in Trastevere, in the



FILIPPO LIPPI

[Cathedral, Spoleto]

mosaics of that ancient apse; but art in the following age, much occupied upon the task of preserving the continuity of the incidents of the sacred legend, so that no blanks or spaces for unauthorised conjecture should be left in its illustrations, imaged not only the wearing of the crown but the ceremony of the coronation. It showed the Saviour in the act of placing a crown upon the head of his Mother who receives it meekly, with folded hands. Later again, in order to co-ordinate events even more definitely still, Titian represents the Angels preparing the crown which the Eternal Father is to bestow upon Mary at her entrance into Paradise.

Towards the fourteenth century, then, Italian art was busied less with the death and Assumption of the Madonna than with her glorious coronation at the hands of Christ. But she is ever clothed with humility, albeit seated in the source and centre of light, whilst the Angels sing her praises, the Patriarchs bless her, the Virgins hold up



DOMENICO GHIRLANDAJO

[Narni

their hands to her, the Saints pay her homage. She is no longer the aged woman leaving her lifeless body on the bed of death, and taking the form of a babe in the arms of her Redeemer; she is the Queen whose brows the Eternal crowns, the young Mother in apotheosis. Dante, in the thirty-first canto of the *Paradiso*, describes the Virgin in triumph in the midst of the peaceful flames of gold, and surrounded by an aureole with more than a thousand rejoicing Angels.

“Vidi quindi ai lor giochi ed ai lor canti
Ridere una bellezza, che letizia
Era negli occhi a tutti gli altri santi”

(“Then did I behold a Beauty who laughed to see their games and to hear their songs, and she was the joy that was in the eyes of all the other Saints”). Dante might here be describing the painting by Giotto in Santa Croce at Florence, where the Angels and Saints are ever all absorbed in the contemplation of Mary, their lips apart with wonder, and their eyes intent upon the celestial Mother. At Pisa, in the Camposanto, as at Florence in the tabernacle of Orcagna at Or' San Michele, the Virgin stands enveloped in an oval aureole that may correspond with the *pacifica orifiamma* of Dante, and all around her figure. “with plumes apart,” as the poet sings, stand the happy Angels.

“Io vidi sopra lei tanta allegrezza
Piover”

(“I saw so much joy raining upon her”), adds Dante; and then he names the Saints, and amongst them Anna.

“Che non move occhi per cantar Osanna”

(“She moveth not her eyes as she sings Hosanna”), and Gabriel, who

“Guarda negli occhi la nostra regina
Innamorato sì che par di foco”

(“Who looks into the eyes of this our Queen, and is so enamoured that he seems of fire”). In its interpretation of the hymns of triumph raised to the name of Mary, art did not neglect its own work of elaboration. The scene of the death of Mary is rendered with the most vivid realisation. The Virgin lies entranced, with folded hands,



ATTRIBUTED TO CIVITALI AND AMBROGIO PUCCI

[Lucca

and the Apostles pray. St. Peter, dressed as a priest, reads the prayers for the dead, another Apostle holds the aspersorium or sprinkler, a third the stoup of holy water, a fourth the thurible, the rest murmur the responses, and one of these, as the bier is raised for carrying away, sadly kisses the hand of the blessed of the nations. Angels stand amongst the twelve Apostles of Christ holding torches, and the



A. BORGOGNONE

[San Simpliciano, Milan]

Redeemer Himself is present with the new-born soul in His arms. Thus the legend took form, adorned with ritual, with the customs of Western Europe, animated with the expression of grief and with the dramatic emotion of the story. Orcagna, at Or' San Michele, has a group of mourning Apostles bent with age and grief; Spinello Aretino at Siena fills his figures with sorrow and devotion as they surround the body of the Dead; Peter reads the ritual from a book, John raises his eyes, forlorn, to Heaven, and two Angels, kneeling, hold the candlesticks with lighted candles at the head of the death-bed. A circle of weeping faces surrounds the bier of the Virgin in Taddeo di Bartolo's



PINTURICCHIO

[Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome

work at the Palazzo della Signoria, Siena, which illustrates the several moments of the Passing of the Virgin. Here we see the Apostles alighting at Mary's house and pressing her welcoming hand; next the transit of her soul, received by the Redeemer into His arms; thirdly the funeral procession under the walls of Jerusalem; in a fourth picture the Apostles are assembled around the empty sepulchre, and St. Thomas shows to his companions the girdle granted to him by Mary in a vision. Taddeo Bartoli follows the legend so closely as to number only eleven Apostles in the death-chamber scene, whereas the other painters represent the twelve. Taddeo also attempts the legendary miracle at the burial, and paints the sacrilegious priest with his withered arm upon the bier—not, however, with so much realisation of detail as is done in a later picture, to be found in a private collection in London, in which the man is seen prostrate, while an Angel with a sword stands by, having just hewn off his hands, which remain fastened to the bier.

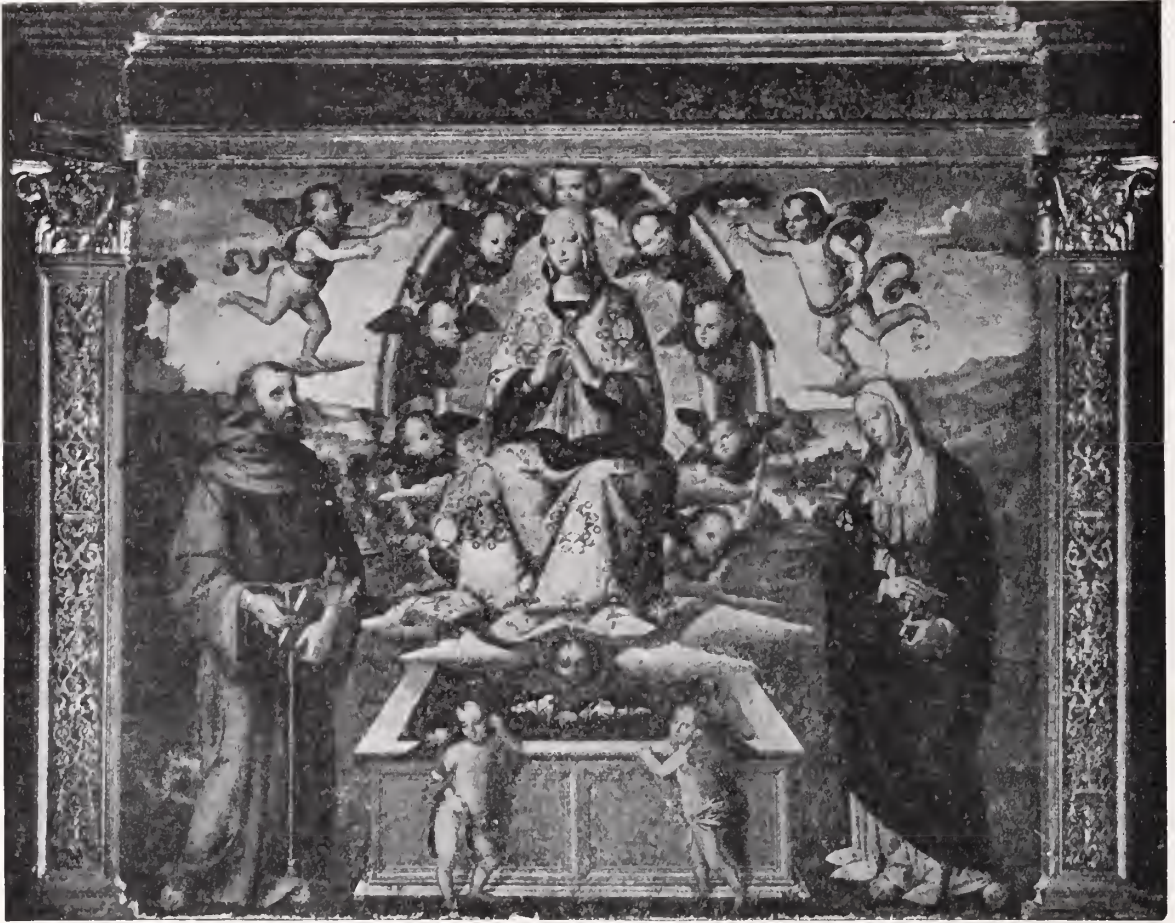
The painters who illustrated thus the traditionary story of the death of Mary felt the necessity of distinguishing the supernatural from the natural incidents. In time they ceased to include the figure of Christ in the group at the bedside. He is present, but uplifted, surrounded by seraphim or wearing an aureole of glory. Thus it is at Siena in the picture by Bartolo di Fredi, and at Padua in the fresco of Jacopo Avanzi in the church of San Michele—that naturalistic and devout composition in which heaven and earth gather to keep watch at this death-bed. This is one of the latest of all representations of the death of Mary. The fifteenth-century painters preferred the Assumption and the Coronation, sometimes combining both these mysteries in one scene. At the beginning of the fifteenth century Fra Angelico, in a picture now at the Uffizi, painted the Passing of the Virgin according to the Byzantine tradition. In others of his works—master-works of Tuscan Christian art—he has separated the Death from the Coronation. Also at the Uffizi Gallery is his sublime Coronation, with the Saints in ecstasy. We may perceive the visible soul thrilling with joy in Angelico's beautiful Saints, and shining as through crystal in the happy creatures that slowly circle about the thrones of Christ and Mary in the form of an open rose. The Angels sound their long trumpets, sing to their various instruments, and swing the thurible; the generations



RAPHAEL

[Vatican Gallery

of the Blessed listen and wonder; and the eye of the Eternal is as the sun of this heavenly scene. Following Giotto's example, Angelico represents the Virgin after her death as in the flower of youth, and in his work Patriarchs and Bishops also seem to be endowed with a young beauty, or at least with signs of the perfection of human life.



MATTEO BALDUCCI

[Siena]

Throughout the fifteenth century the Coronation remains a great and splendid spectacular scene, in which the choir of the Angels and of the Elect have part. The celestial ceremony took place, in the fourteenth century, upon material thrones, under canopies or arches; in the following age it is ranged upon clouds amongst the plumes of wings and the flowers of Paradise. Filippo Lippi, in the cathedral of Spoleto, under the cloud and the rainbow, indicated the stars, the sea full of fish, and the mountains of earth. Botticelli, in the picture at the



PINTURICCHIO

[Vatican Gallery]

Florentine Accademia, mingled roses with his clouds circled by Angels. Domenico Ghirlandajo, at Narni, has a star of light shining behind the Divinity, and, above, two Angels holding a canopy upon which is written "*Electa Mea*," and the words following. But the multitude of the Blessed are dispersed by degrees, and at the close of the fifteenth century, and in Botticelli's Coronation at Florence, we find only the four Doctors of the Church; and only six Saints in Pollaiuolo's at San Gemignano. The simpler representations of the Assumption cease to represent the gathering of the Apostles around the vacant



SODOMA

[Siena

sepulchre; nor do they place the figure of Mary, enthroned, within the *mandorla*, or almond-shaped aureole, as in the fourteenth century; she is seated upon clouds, or stands amid rays of light or tongues of flame.



GIULIO ROMANO AND IL FATTORE

[Vatican Gallery]

The *mandorla* is modified, or disappears, or its place is taken by Angels in elliptical group disposed about the glorified figure of the



TITIAN

[Venice

Virgin. The Coronation and the Assumption are united in a single picture by Pinturicchio at the Vatican, where the Coronation is witnessed by the twelve Apostles and a few of the Blessed; and by Raphael, also at the Vatican, where the Virgin, crowned by the hands of her Son, appears to the eyes of the Apostles. In the picture last named, from the uncovered sepulchre spring lilies and roses; this being a free interpretation of a passage attributed to St. John Damascene, in which it is related that St. Thomas, opening the tomb, found nothing there except the grave-clothes which had been wrapped around the body, and which gave forth a sweet fragrance.

The echoes of the ancient popular legend never died away. The genius of art gladly heard them. Even when, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, it might be said that mediæval tradition had become almost inaudible, art was but choosing the sweetest story and the gentlest legend for continuance in her work. At this date of the Renaissance, a whole labour of modification, of reduction, of selection was going forward. As the Middle Ages multiplied legends,



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so the Renaissance rejected or selected them. And, this labour well accomplished, Italian genius raises its final and immortal monuments.

Titian's Madonna ascends towards Heaven upon lucid clouds, lifted by the hands of a multitude of little Angels; one of these holds the folds of her mantle, another sounds the cymbals, another the pipe; a number sing in chorus. One, wondering, looks the Queen of Heaven in the face; another venerates her with folded hands. Beyond, other Angels are winging away through the sky, scattering the glory. Other celestial children, full of life, health, and colour, gaze at the image of the Eternal Father and float within the light to which the Virgin is rising. The Eternal looks upon her with joy, and an impatient Angel waits to set the crown of the heavenly kingdom upon her head. On earth, the Apostles in shadow are restless, full of movement and wonder, looking up at the Woman of the heavens and at the singing, playing, and rejoicing company that surrounds her. She stands with eyes uplifted and with the open arms of the *orante*; but this is not the mystic *orante* of the Catacombs, nor the priestess of Byzantium,

but a human creature, rich in health and strength, warmed by summer
sunshine, a glorious mother of a Son blessed amongst babes, keeping
a festival of light. And whilst this song of a great painter
resounds on the lagoon of Venice, at Parma the voice of
Allegri, rather silver than gold, sings under the cupola
of the cathedral. Here the Virgin, in the act of
sweet and happy self-abandonment, holds out
her arms upon the clouds; and all around
flutter the Angels and glance hither
and thither; clouds and Angels
together carrying upwards
the flower of the Grace
of Heaven.

THE END



THE MADONNA



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